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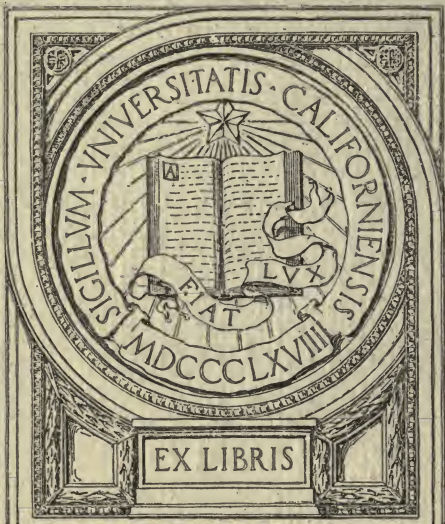

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New-Church Popular Series. [No. 1.

THE WORLD BEYOND:

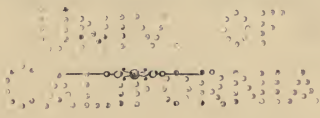
PRESENTING

SOME OF THE FACTS, LAWS AND PHENOMENA OF THE GREAT HEREAFTER.

BY

JOHN DOUGHTY,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST NEW JERUSALEM SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO.



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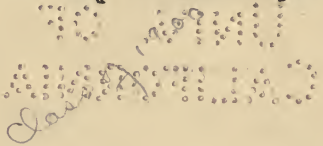

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PREFACE.

THIS little work consists of a series of lectures delivered by the author in the New Jerusalem Temple in San Francisco, in the spring and autumn of 1878. They were well received at the time of their delivery, and a considerable number of persons who heard them, have since expressed a desire to see them in a printed form. They are therefore given here substantially as they were delivered, in the hope that they may, in their present form, reach a somewhat larger audience, and thus become more extensively useful.

The work lays no claim to doctrinal originality, nor does it pretend to be an exhaustive treatise on the sublime subject whereof it treats. It has been the author's desire and purpose simply to present in an intelligible and compact form, the rational and Scriptural argument in support of the more prominent beliefs and teachings of the New Church

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concerning the life beyond the grave; trusting that his very brevity of statement, coupled with the intrinsic interest and importance of the theme, may kindle in the mind of the reader a desire to pursue the investigation.

And if such desire should be awakened, the inquirer is referred for further instruction to Swedenborg's work on "Heaven and Hell," to the neat little volumes (I. and II.) of the "Swedenborg Library," to "The New View of Hell," by Mr. Barrett, and "Our Children in Heaven," by Dr. Holcombe. By a careful perusal of these works, he will not only obtain a thorough knowledge of the Pneumatology of the New Church, but learn all that a thoughtful and reasonable person would care to know about the World Beyond, or the facts, laws and phenomena of the great Hereafter.

J. D.

San Francisco,
September 5, 1882.

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HEAVEN.

THE WORLD BEYOND.

HEAVEN.

I.

NATURE AND ORIGIN OF HEAVEN.

THE subject of immortality is one of surpassing interest. There are few topics which can more profitably engage our thoughts, for a time at least, than this. The vastness of the theme almost appals us. The wide field over which it spreads, the numerous questions which present themselves, the many problems seemingly so difficult which it involves, produce a state of mind which seeks relief, not always in skepticism, but frequently in absolute denial.

Yet a belief in the soul's immortality is the rule; doubt and denial, the exception. Skeptics say that there are no proofs. Believers assert that the evidences are manifold and overwhelming. Infidels affirm that the wish is father to the thought. Christians declare that it is an almost universal sentiment: true, because it is inborn; not to be doubted, because it is a need of human nature; certain, because it is a matter of Divine revelation.

It is sometimes useless to reason. If there is no affirmative principle to appeal to, all argument is in vain. If you plant a seed in the sand, it will not grow for lack of the proper nutriment; and if you insinuate a spiritual idea into an irretrievably skeptical mind, it will take no root for want of proper soil. An inharmonious mind does not believe in harmony; but a musical nature believes in melody, because every fibre thrills with its sweet concord. A selfish man does not believe in the possibility of disinterestedness, nor a profligate in virtue. To them these heavenly graces appear as impossibilities. But so far as one is unselfish, he knows its possibility; and so far as he is virtuous, he believes in the reality of virtue.

Why argue these first principles of religion. They are matters of consciousness, not of controversy. The true follower of the Lord, no matter how far he may fall short of the full realization of his faith, knows what he knows by the necessities of his nature. He realizes revelation as the mathematician realizes the wonderful certainty and power of numbers, as the musician feels the force of melody, as the artist sees the beauty of art.

So of the immortality of the soul. It is a matter of inspiration, not of argument. It comes by a realization of one's nature, not by external proofs. True, proofs of the future life abound; proofs of the soul's continued existence beyond this life, are plentiful on every hand. Yet there are multitudes who, without these, *know* of their own immortality, because they feel it as a need of their nature. They

look around upon creation, and observe that never yet has God implanted an instinct, for the gratification of which He has failed to provide the means; and of all our human instincts, not one is stronger than the hope of immortality.

We do not, therefore, argue the immortality of the soul here. We speak to all, indeed, but more especially at this time to those whose nature so feels its need as to realize it as a fact.

Revelation is replete with the idea of a heaven. From Genesis to the glowing record of the visions of John, it crops out here and there even in the most literal sense of holy Writ, brightening in beauty, growing in grandeur, developing in power, until in the Apocalypse it bursts forth in a mysterious glory which it bates the breath to listen to. We who have wept amid this world's woes until we have grown weary; we who have looked upon its crimes, its wars, its violence and disorders until the eyes have sickened with the sight; we who greet its misery and wretchedness at every corner, and have, in our own persons, known its disappointments, its sorrows and its vices; even we are called upon, in the glowing words of inspiration and the wonderful visions of men filled with the spirit of God, to lift our eyes from the kingdoms of earth to the kingdom of heaven.

The conditions of the Holy City New Jerusalem are the revealed conditions of heaven itself. For what descends from God out of heaven must reveal the absolute nature of that which exists in heaven. No tears are there, no sorrow, no crying, no night,

no pain, no death; for the former things—the earthly passions, the confusion and disorder of the world, the soul's unrest—have passed away. Its streets are of gold, because all its paths are love, the true gold of life. Its walls are of jasper, because the Word of God is the angel's wall of defence, translucent with the light of Divine wisdom. Its foundations are of all manner of precious stones, because the lives of its denizens are founded on the precious stones of truth laid down or revealed by the Lord himself. Nature's sun grows dark in its beautiful light, for the glory of God illumines its skies. The throne of the Lord is there, and from it the river of water of life flows, and the Tree of Life stands everywhere in its streets, whose leaves heal all the diseases of the soul.

Then the heart cries out as it reads the glowing page lit with the Divine light of inspiration—Beautiful kingdom of heaven! blest dwelling-place of immortal souls! where art thou? what art thou? and for whom were thy wondrous glories formed? O land of the heart beyond the dark river! is there a home there for me? for me, the weary and worn with the troubles and trials of earth?

Revelation was never designed for didactic teaching, like the school-books of our childhood. It does not contain the history of all religions with their dates and epochs; nor the arithmetic of the soul with its faculties and powers labeled and numbered, and with easy rules for the multiplication of its virtues; nor the geography and climatology of heaven with a catalogue of its chief products and the com-

mercial value of its imports and exports. How man will persist in mistaking the spirit and intent of the holy Word!

The sayings of the Bible are, on the contrary, like so many seeds of truth dropped into the soil of human minds, there to germinate and grow. They grow as we give them life within the heart; they germinate as we warm them with love; they spring from the cold, damp earth, and rise into the sunny atmosphere of heart-land, as the tears of life, instead of flowing off into desert sands, water them and start them into greener growth.

The Word of God does not, therefore, teach us many facts in regard to heaven; but it gives us innumerable seed-germs of truth, which will grow into immense heart realizations of its nature as we grow toward heaven and the Lord.

Let us see. The first great truth of Revelation that comes from a close examination of its pages, is: That heaven is a state of the soul and not a place. It is a condition of the heart and not a locality. Let us endeavor to fully comprehend this. There is no understanding this question of salvation, eternal life, and heaven without it. It is the golden thread that leads us through all the labyrinths of what is otherwise so puzzling a theme. Heaven may indeed be *in* a place—in any place; but it is the hearts of the people and not the place that make it heaven. It is the Lord's sphere or influence within the soul which constitutes all that can be properly recognized as the kingdom of heaven.

Nor is this very difficult to understand. When

our Lord, at the beginning of his active ministry, said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," He made no allusion to any remote locality, any planet, star, or sun coming into proximity with the earth; but He referred to the coming power of Christian truth and righteousness. When He declared to the scribe who answered Him so discreetly, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven," He had no reference to his nearness to any particular place, but to a heavenly state of mind. And when He was demanded of the Pharisees concerning the coming of the kingdom of God, He answered, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you!" Now, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God mean the same thing. This is evident from the fact that, in several instances, in relating the same event, one evangelist quotes Jesus as using the expression *kingdom of heaven*, and another that of *kingdom of God*. As notice the Beatitude, which, as given by Matthew, reads, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."† But in Luke, we read, "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."* Paul expressed the truth in happy phrase when he said to the Romans, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." ‡ Purity, peace, religion, the Lord's spirit within the soul —these constitute heaven there.

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* Luke vi. 20. † Matt. v. 3. ‡ Rom. xiv. 17.

Beautiful thought! We need not leave this earth to enter heaven. Heaven is within us. God's kingdom is right here. When we are heavenly minded, we carry it about with us. Wherever we go, wherever we stay, we are in heaven. It is part of us; it is inwoven into the very tissues of our being. Just as the summer blue is inwoven into the make-up of the sky, as the lovely light into the brilliancy of the morning, as beauty into the very existence of the flower, so heaven becomes the constituent organization of the soul. It is its life and beauty; it is its happiness and joy; it is its work and reward. It is ours wherever we are. It descends into the offices of the hands; it thrills the thoughts with nobler life; it loves through all our affections; it makes of us men, not beasts; and it glows with the living spirit of God.

Our Lord never spoke of heaven as something remote from us. But He often alluded to it as something that could be preached, something that could come nigh unto us, something within us. The idea of the external heavens has, in the grossly natural minds of men, taken the place of the thought evolved in the Word of God. That the ancients, in the belief that the sky was a solid brazen firmament, should have placed the abode of the immortals upon its upper surface, and have confounded the starry heavens of nature with the kingdom of heaven preached by Christ, is not to be wondered at. But that any at this day should make a mistake akin to that, is, indeed, surprising.

Let us reiterate it; let us repeat it again and

again until it is thoroughly grooved into the mind; that heaven is within us. All its first principles are there; all its outcomes flow from them. The word *heaven* is derived from one that signifies *high*. Whatever is high, lofty, elevated—in desire, in thought, in aspiration, in purpose—that is heaven within. Our Lord came into the world for the express purpose of elevating the human mind, then so thoroughly debased; of ennobling the human character, then so miserably degraded. He preached repentance; He preached regeneration; He preached self-abnegation—love to God and man. In doing this He preached the kingdom of heaven. When He found those who did his commandments and lived near to the spirit of his law, He said that they were not far from the kingdom of heaven. Of the humble in spirit, and of those who were persecuted because of their righteousness, He said, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* It was not a thing of the future; it was a thing of the present. It was not a reward to come, but an existing condition of the heart. It was not, "theirs *will be*," but "theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven." And when He summed up the qualifications of those who were the blessed of the earth, the blessing was not of the future but of the present; it was not "Blessed *will ye be*," but it was "Blessed *are ye*;" and He did not add as the great incentive to religious life, "Great *shall be* your reward in heaven," but "Great *is* your reward in heaven."† Heaven was a present thing; heaven was within them.

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* Matt. v. 3, 10. † Matt. v. 12.

This is not difficult to comprehend. Its beginnings and some of its developments are frequently perceived and recognized. You go into an assembly of innocent little children; you observe them at their sports; you hear their songs ascend, imperfect though they be, with childish melody. There is always a feeling of nearness to heaven in the gatherings of little children, because the sphere of innocence prevails; and innocence is one of the constituent principles of heaven.

Go where you please—wherever circumstances and surroundings lift up your hearts and thoughts, so that you are carried away, as it were, from self and sensual things, from worldly cares and worries, into a region of mental peace and quietness, and there pervades your spirit a feeling of forgiveness to men and love for all, when your passions are at rest and a gentle calm is on the soul, and you will be very apt to describe your feelings by the exclamation, "I felt as though I were in heaven!" And you were. But because you were educated to believe in heaven as a place beyond the skies, in sun or moon or stars, or perhaps on earth when the millennial fires shall have purified it ages hence, you did not know where you were. But, let us learn this; that gentleness and peace of soul and rest of spirit and elevation above sensual thoughts and the quieting of earthly passions and disinterested neighborly love constitute the essence of heaven. Heaven is of the spirit, and all places are heaven when the soul is in a heavenly state.

Or perhaps you have been in a family where recip-

rocal forbearance and mutual love have made the manners gentle and softened the harshness of the voice; where neatness and order prevail, and method makes work easy; where all devote themselves to the happiness of each, and each to that of all; where even amusements become a source of mutual conciliation and love; where the tastes are refined, and where religion without fanaticism sits by the hearthstone and reigns throughout the house. You will return from a visit to such a family and say, "That home is a perfect little heaven." It *is* a heaven. It needs no millennial fire to make it so. It is a heaven *to-day*, because all the virtues ruling there are the very essence of heaven. The hearts that cherish them have built a heaven there.

Then, imagine this Divine spirit and these holy principles carried into all the offices of the world. Let each man in society subordinate his selfhood to the general good; make sincerity the law of social life; eliminate from toil its vulgarity; from mercantile life its dishonor; from the bench its corruption; from politics its selfish ambition; from the church its bigotry; from capital its greed; from all things whatever is contrary to Christ's code of ethics, and earth would be a heaven without any approximation toward the stars. For where good and God reign triumphant, there we behold the kingdom of heaven.

But do not understand me as calling in question the existence of a heaven beyond the grave—of a future state of being so denominated in Scripture. As revelation is true, so that is true. It is reiterated a hundred times, and breathes through all its pages,

and exists as a necessary corollary to every evangelic truth. But this is the point: its *essence* is in the heart, and there is a heaven hereafter, not because God has created a locality in space which has been so named, but because earth throws from her restless bosom each year and day, souls more or less charged with the principles and spirit of heaven. These congregate in the future world. They are drawn together there by the force of spiritual attraction; they are bound by the ties of mutual affinity; and wherever heavenly hearts go, in this world or the world beyond, there heaven exists.

Heaven, therefore, is the state and condition of the good. In the realms above, it exists because of the goodness of those there. The sphere of love flows from each to all and from all to each. They unite in a sphere of love to God and mutual love. Self has been dethroned. Each, forgetful of self, seeks only the good and the happiness of others. Consequently the happiness and good of all are marvelously subserved. Justice prevails; right reigns triumphant; no one calls them in question. Anger is unknown; malice is never seen; slander is never heard; sensuality has no part in its joys. The commandments of God are the laws of society; the spirit of Christ rests within all hearts; and love of the virtues which Christianity teaches and stands for, is the authority by which their obedience is enforced.

The origin of heaven is therefore in the hearts of earth. It is in the cultivation of the spirit and commandments of the Lord, the bringing them forth into daily life, and the consequent reduction of the

affairs of life, domestic, social, industrial, commercial and political, to that state of tranquillity, order, justice, honesty and love, toward which the commandments of God plainly point. It is the faithful observance of these commandments on earth, that builds the mansions of heaven above. As one of England's poets says:

> "Angels are men of a superior kind;
> Angels are men in lighter habit clad,
> High o'er celestial mountains winged in flight;
> And men are angels loaded for an hour,
> Who wade this miry vale, and climb, with pain
> And slippery step, the bottom of the steep."—*Young.*

The idea that heaven was formed from a race of beings called angels, created long before our world began to exist, is a tradition and a myth. It has been sustained only by the wrenching of a few passages of Scripture from their true meaning. All Scripture allusion to angels gives them the form and attributes of men. Moses and Elias, who were seen on the Mount of Transfiguration, had been men. The angel who announced to John, "I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets,"* was clearly one of the old Jewish prophets now become an angel. The great multitude of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, who were seen by John standing before the throne of God,† were angels who had once been men, gathered from all the regions of the earth. And not only does all Scripture favor the idea that angels are beings who

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* Rev. xxii. 9. † Rev. vii. 9.

had once been men, but it repeatedly calls them men. The three who appeared to Abraham, the two who made themselves manifest to Lot, the one who wrestled with Jacob at Peniel, the angel-captain of the Lord's host who appeared to Joshua at Jericho, all the angels who appeared to Ezekiel, the two who were seen in shining garments at the sepulchre, and many others too numerous to mention, are referred to as men and are so denominated.

Earth is the seminary of angels, and heaven has its origin here. The Scripture tells us so. I say this, of course, only in the sense that human beings are born on earth as the nursery of heaven; that they are placed here first, in order that they may begin, as all things begin, from the egg, the seed, the first germ of existence, and grow by gradual unfoldings and increasings into the perfect life for which they were destined. Were there no earth, there would be no heaven, because there would be no births of children born to become men and women, and destined, if they will, to become angels.

But in a higher sense, in the real and true sense, the Lord is the origin of heaven. He is so, because He is the origin of all that is true and good. The Gospel doctrine of regeneration is hardly appreciated by us in its proper meaning. Christians often assent to it without realizing the genuine truth. It is in too many instances a verbal assent, rather than a comprehended idea or a realized fact. When our Lord says, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit,"* He states a

* John xv. 5.

positive fact and uses no metaphor. When He says, "Without me, ye can do nothing," He means that there must, in some sense, be an indwelling of Himself in the human soul, which gives to it all its spiritual life, germination and growth. Without this, we cannot think a true thought nor do a good act; nor can we love Him or any one, or even comprehend the first principles of true religious life. His indwelling is an actual one, and it is by means of his Holy Spirit. When He communicated the Holy Spirit to his disciples according to previous promise, "He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit."* This may be compared to the dwelling of the sun in the bosom of the earth and in its atmospheres. The sun, as it were, breathes forth its light and heat, which enter the atmospheres and substances of the earth, and furnish the quickening powers or means of growth to all that exists upon its surface.

The Lord is often compared to the sun in Scripture. Let us, then, think of the All-father as surrounded by the spiritual sun, whence continually radiate love and wisdom, the warmth and light of the soul, which are indeed Himself, and which enter the spirit and dwell there. These become its quickening life. If a truth enters the mind seemingly from without, they light it up to our comprehension. If that truth discloses the path of wisdom and right, they warm the heart to love it, they give the strength to live it, they give the force to act it

* John xx. 22.

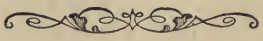
out on the natural plane of life. Under their influence the heart expands, the mind grows, the spiritual understanding quickens, the holier love develops. True, the man is in freedom to reject this Divine light and life. He can turn from it and shut the door of mind and heart against its influences. But if he co-operates, if he places himself in a position to receive them, if he grasps the means which God affords, he goes on conquering and to conquer in the battle of life.

The Lord, therefore, is the true origin of heaven. He furnishes the wisdom, the good, the force, the holy power, which make the heavens. Man's soul is the mediate origin, as being the plane of its human commencement and the field of its growth. Earth is the theatre of its beginnings, as here its first operations and growths are brought into play. But the region of immortal bliss beyond the grave is its final, its fullest and grandest field of action.

Is there no lesson in this? Are there no duties here enjoined? Are we not doing most, each in his little sphere, to build our mansions above, by making a heaven of every theatre of action here below? Go, then, brethren, each one of you, to your own field of action. Go to your family, enter into your social circle, work at your trade, perform the duties of your office, and put heaven into them. Thrust your selfhood aside and put your neighbor's good in the first place. That is the way to find heaven. You need no wings to carry you there. Do not be ever praying for the rewards of heaven at some future time. Make your heaven here, or you will

surely lose it hereafter. If you cannot see much of it around you, see to it that it is built up within your own soul. You can be certain of heaven in no other way.

And rest assured that what you do not acquire in your spirit here, you cannot carry with you to the world beyond. For spirit, not flesh, rises into the eternal land. And if you do not carry from here a heaven in your heart, that heart will never find a heaven in any spot in all the realms of future life. Give up all worrying about your salvation hereafter. What you want is salvation in this world; that in the world to come will follow as a matter of course. The truth of Christ lived out upon the field of active life and duty, will save you; his life received into the soul as your source of strength and growth, will save you; but his literal blood and death, never! Your salvation is here; your entrance into heaven is here; your life is here; your heaven itself is here, if you will but have it so. It is in your heart, your desire, your thought, your motive, your purpose, your activity, your life, your works. And as you acquire heaven here, so only will you know it, and find it, and enjoy it, and love it, in the world to come.



II.

THE TWO RESURRECTIONS.

WHATEVER primitive Christianity may have been, modern theology, it must be conceded, is a compromise between Christianity and Paganism. When the new religion began to become wide-spread and popular, then by degrees its simplicity faded away. Under Paul and the other apostles harmonious and united, soon the church became discordant, soon broken into belligerent factions. The self-sacrificing spirit of the apostles gave way to the domineering temper of a new race of priests. Then a desire to extend the sway of the priesthood, took the place of the former love of diffusing the spirit of the gospel. Pagan Europe refusing to accept the pure doctrine and self-sacrificing life of Christianity, a crusade was inaugurated for the triumph of its name and outward baptism. If Pagan gods had anniversary days devoted to their peculiar worship, those days were accepted in the Christian scheme, and employed to commemorate events in the life of Christ, for the purpose of rendering Christianity more acceptable. If Pagan priests wore at their services gaudy vestments to please the wondering eyes of the vulgar, the Christian priests adopted them. If there existed popular Pagan theories, the ingrafting of which on the doctrines of Christ would form a scheme which might be termed "Christianity

made easy," they were so ingrafted. Then this bold or that bad man who had within him more of the love of dominion than the love of Christ, set up his peculiar engraftment or dogma or theory as the essential thing in Christianity, in order to have a watchword for the gathering of followers and the gaining of a large backing to hoist him into ecclesiastical power. The doctrinal terms of Christianity were construed by each ecclesiastical high-place hunter to suit himself. If argument would not carry the day, as it seldom did, blows were resorted to. The sword became the most popular argument known to this pseudo-Christianity. The strongest arm settled the question as to which or what was the purest doctrine. This process was applied to an innumerable number of disputed topics, in which all questions of Christian doctrine became inextricably involved, until at last the most important were settled by compromise in general council, and the mailed hand of an utterly unprincipled Roman emperor enforced that compromise on the Christian world. And this mixture has, in its main features, come down to our day as orthodox Christianity and evangelical faith.

This is not mere assertion. It is history; and every one may read it for himself. Nor is it aside from our subject. It is a protest against accepting any generally received theological opinion or definition, merely because it is generally received, or because it is old. The heathenish spirit of the middle ages does not, of necessity, give to definition or doctrine the flavor of truth.

The doctrine of the Resurrection as usually received, may be old; but that does not necessarily make it true. It may have come down to us crystallized into a certain form, but that is no argument in favor of its correctness. There is a resurrection. Christ taught it; the apostles preached it. One sect, at least, of the Jews believed in it before the time of Christ. The Jewish resurrection was, however, that of the material body, and at a future judgment day. But Christ did not so teach it, nor did the apostles so preach it. Yet either through the mixture of Judaism with Christianity, or the effort to pander to Judaic paganism for the sake of proselytes, that sensuous conception, after the time of the apostles, became incorporated into the Christian system, formed part of the heterogeneous compromise afterwards made, and has held its own ever since.

We must therefore go back to the gospels if we would learn the truth concerning the resurrection. And we may add to this the testimony of Paul, if we would know how the doctrine was held in the Apostolic church. The creeds of the sects will not serve us here; they have too much of the flavor of the period when the new religion was in a very unsettled state. And it is safer even to go back to the original term used in the Gospels, than to trust to the word *resurrection*, which is the term used in translating the original Greek. This has acquired a theological meaning of which it is not easy to divest our minds.

The original Greek term of the New Testament,

translated *resurrection*, is *anastasis*. It is derived from the verb *anistemi*, to cause to stand up. It does not mean, to arise in the sense of floating upwards. No such signification attaches to the word. It does not mean a resuscitation of anything literally dead. The Greeks never so understood or applied it. But it was used as in such instances as that where Matthew, who was sitting at the receipt of custom, *arose* and followed Jesus; that is, *stood up* and followed Him. When, therefore, we are construing Scripture, where this term *resurrection*, or *anastasis*, occurs, we get the exact meaning by thinking of it, not as of something dead coming to life, which it does not mean—nor as of a vivified dead body rising and floating off to the skies, which also it does not mean; but as of something alive that has been sitting or lying down, bent, or prone, now standing up.

Our Lord used this term, therefore, as He used all terms, because it expressed just what He meant. He desired to set forth a new idea. True, the Jews (or some of them) believed in a resurrection of the body; but He desired to teach the resurrection of the spirit—the real man. True, they believed in this event as one that was to happen at a future judgment day; but He desired to teach it as an event transpiring now. What, then, did He mean by the anastasis or resurrection? Evidently this: that while at death the body would descend to the dust from whence it was taken, would decay, die, in the sense of the absolute dissolution and diffusion

of its particles, the soul would stand up in the plenitude of its power as the real immortal man.

The expression was an apt one. All the forces of the soul are, during its residence in the body, bent down, as it were, toward the earth. The spirit looks down into the world through its bodily eyes, and bends down to listen to the sounds of the world through its bodily ears. Every mental faculty, for the sake of the soul's life, by means of its earthly body leads toward the world. The very fact of living in a material body concentrates its thoughts and efforts in that direction. But when at death the spirit is released from the body, it ceases to bend its faculties and efforts down toward the world, and stands up in its own congenial realm. This is the *anastasis*, the standing up, the resurrection.

But to comprehend this fully, we must understand that man is a two-fold being. He is body and soul, or body and spirit. The soul or spirit is the real man; the body is the material garment it puts on for the purposes of its earth-life. Spirit and matter are different, separated by discrete degrees. Spirit is not matter, nor is it material; any more than water is earth or earthy; any more than earth is air or ethereal. To present the chemical difference between the two is not our purpose, nor is it in our power. But the fact remains; as water is a distinct element from earth, and earth from air, so is spirit a distinct thing from all of them, and from all that is material. But that does not render it less perfect, less alive, or less potential; but more so. For on the principle that what pro-

pels is more powerful than the thing propelled, that what moves is more alive than the thing moved, so spirit is more alive than matter. A ship of itself is a dead thing compared with the wind which propels it. The iron body and bolts of the engine are very inert and powerless compared with the steam which nerves them with giant strength. So the human body of itself is inert matter compared with the spirit which fills it with life and power.

Now if spirit gives to body all the life and power it has, it must itself be much alive and very powerful. And that the spirit is the life and power of the body is manifest from the fact, that when it is withdrawn at death, the body becomes powerless and dead. And if the spirit is the body's life and power, it also causes and preserves the body's peculiar form. The body has eyes for the spirit to see through; ears for the spirit to hear through; arms and hands for the spirit to do its destined work with; feet to enable it to walk whithersoever the spirit may determine; brains to be the material abode of the spirit from whence it may send its messages and orders all through the body-man to its very eyelids, fingers and toes.

There is a material-man, and a spirit-man within the material; and the spirit is more a man than the body. The spirit is the real man, while the body is but the machine man. Did you ever examine a school-book on physiology, where the different systems that make up a man are separately set forth in wood-cut illustrations? There is the bony system; it pervades the whole man, and, depicted alone

as a skeleton, it is in the form of a man. There is the arterial or venous system; it also pervades the entire man, and pictured by itself is in the form of a man. There is the nervous system; it again permeates the entire frame, and its pictured representation is a man. So with the fleshly or muscular system. Now, do you not believe that the same is true of the spiritual system? that, could it be faithfully pictured, it would be found to pervade the whole bodily frame? and that this is the cause of all the vitality, power and activity of the material system? that the living force of it all pervaded and filled it, lay close to every nerve and muscle and fibre, acted upon it from within and forced it everywhere to do its bidding? that spirit eyes saw into the world through eyes of flesh and nerve and artery? that spirit hands worked in the world through hands of bone and sinew? that spirit feet walked through the world and bore their master whither he would, through feet of muscle, bone, and tendon? The spirit, then, is a man. It must have form, or it could not possess power. And what can this form be but the human form?

And when the spirit has used the body long enough; when it has done its allotted work on the plane of earthly life; when the machine has become worn out and incapable of doing longer its master's bidding, whether through outward violence, disease or old age; when the spirit and its material vesture are separated, and the body returns to the dust from whence it came; then the spirit stands up in its own sphere, on its own plane of life, a perfect man,

grown, developed, and perfected through its earth-life and work and experience, ready to live a new life on its new plane of being. This is its anastasis; this is its resurrection.

And this the Scripture teaches; not indeed in the words of the illustrations I have here used, but in principle and in fact.

That the natural body does not rise, was unquestionably believed by the apostles; and by Paul it is plainly declared. Referring to the resurrection, he says: "But some will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" You observe, he is speaking directly to the point. "Thou fool," he answers, "that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be." What could be plainer? The natural body is the one sown in death; this we know. But the body that shall be, the body in which we shall live hereafter, is *not*, says Paul, the one that is sown. Then he goes on to show that there are different kinds of bodies; that different orders of beings have different bodies, each suited to its peculiar sphere; beasts one kind, birds another; and so on. Then he says, there are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial, and one star differs from another in glory. Having paved the way for his final point, he declares: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; a natural body is sown, a spiritual body is raised." In our common version

it reads, "it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body,"* as though the same body that was sown was raised. But Paul's Greek does not read so. What he really said, giving to his words their correct translation and meaning, was: "*A natural body is sown; a spiritual body is raised.*" To paraphrase the language in accordance with its true spirit: The natural body which, in and of itself when released from the spirit, is mere corruption, dishonor and weakness, is sown or laid in the grave; but the spiritual body which is comparatively incorruption, since it cannot die—glory, in that it is immortal—power, in that it gives to the natural all the life and power it has—this rises; this stands up. The material body has no part in the *anastasis;* the spiritual body has it all. And he concludes the sentence with these words, "There is a natural body; and there is a spiritual body." Not there *will be*, but there *is*. We have it all the time. You and I have it now. The one pervades the other, glorious, incorruptible, powerful. It is your spiritual body, the real man, which will stand up at the anastasis or resurrection; but your natural body, corrupt, dishonored by decay, weakness itself, will fall down, dissolve into its original elements, and be known no more forever.

Can anything be plainer than these words of Paul?—anything more conclusive as to the doctrine of the Apostolic church on this subject?—anything more certain than that the doctrine of the resurrection of

* 1 Cor. xv. 35–44.

the material body was afterwards imported from outside of Christianity, and ingrafted upon it. Is there power in human language to express meaning more clearly than these words express this doctrine? Yet Paul, for fear any one might mistake his meaning, added: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."* "Flesh and blood,"—that means this body. "Corruption,"—that means this body dead and decaying. And none of us will carry any of this natural body, this flesh and blood, this corruption, into the land of glory and incorruption, toward which we all, let us hope, are hastening!

This teaching agrees with the doctrine held by Solomon: "Then shall the dust return to the earth from whence it was taken; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."† But better still, it agrees with the teachings of Christ. His lesson to the Sadducees was, that when Moses at the bush called God the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, He then and there taught the doctrine of the *anastasis* or resurrection.‡ "For," said He, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." It was as if He had said: "I declare to you that there is a resurrection; for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are declared, according to the spirit of Moses' declaration, to be already resurrected." Yet the great traditional resurrection day of the future, when bodies should leap from their graves,

* 1 Cor. xv. 50. † Ecc. xii. 7. ‡ Matt. xxii. 31, 32.

had not come ; and this illustration with regard to the patriarchs was the truth respecting all resurrection. Afterwards Peter, James and John were favored with a face to face view of Moses and Elias in their resurrection bodies—their spiritual bodies ; and they were men not myths ; and they talked to Jesus. And every angel that ever showed himself to man, according to the Bible record, and for whom the wildest dogmatic tradition has never claimed material bodies, and every man who ever died and was at any time revealed in vision to prophet or seer, was always seen and known as a man, with speech and form and thought and all the attributes of a man ; and there is no other idea, whatever human tradition may say, which is even hinted at in the Word of God.

So Paul was right ; and each man has a spiritual as well as a natural body ; and when the natural falls the spiritual stands erect ; and that is the way the resurrection takes place. And it must take place at once, and not at some day in the far distant future ; because when the body falls at death, the spirit stands up and lives, and there is no other *anastasis.*

But is there no hint at a general resurrection at some future day ? None whatever, if we take the true spirit of holy Writ. Our allotted limits render it impossible to adduce all the texts which might be cited. But the key to a solution of whatever difficulty is here presented, may be found in this idea, too often forgotten : that there are two kinds of resurrection referred to in the Bible. One is that

from this world into the world beyond; the other is the resurrection from spiritual death to spiritual life. By applying the former idea to the latter class of texts, a seeming sanction, because of the misapplication, is given to the theory of the resurrection of the material body.

Take, for example, these words of the Lord: "The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." Read this in the light of traditional dogma; let not the mind wander from the idea of a bodily resurrection as a confirmed belief, and it appears to teach that doctrine—does it not? But go back a few sentences to the words which lead up to this statement, and of which this is but the conclusion: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and *now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." This NOW IS makes a material alteration in the thought or the doctrine taught. If the hour was coming, and at that moment *was*, that the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God, it was an event that had already begun, that was then progressing, and that would go forward in the future. Certainly the physically dead had not at that time been raised from their graves and none were then being raised. No physically dead men, resurrected, were then listening to the words of Jesus, nor had any such at any time so listened.

Who, then, were the dead here referred to? Evidently those dead in trespasses and sins—those who

were in the condition expressed by the words of Paul, "To be carnally minded is death."* The dead were those who rejected Christ, who refused the gospel, who did not know the Christian life, and were not alive to its glories and blessings. Christ might well say of these, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." He was preaching every day to this kind of dead. Every day was some one receiving life from his words. Those who were spiritually in their graves—in the graves of selfishness and delusion and ignorance and carnal-mindedness, were coming forth to listen to Him. To those who came forth, stood up, listened, and obeyed his words—to those who did the good He taught, it was a resurrection to newness of life—spiritual life; but to those who stood up and listened, yet obeyed Him not, but remained in their ignorance and evil, it was a resurrection of damnation. There is no doctrine of a future general resurrection of physical bodies here; it was a thing not of the future but of the *Now is;* and untrammeled by a traditional dogma, all would see it to be so at a glance.

Now carry this idea to the interpretation of any and every text which seems to teach a future general resurrection day, a resurrection of dead bodies; carry the idea of a spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin to the life of righteousness, from the death of evil-mindedness to the heart-life of purity

* Rom. viii. 6.

which Christ gives, and you will catch the spirit and genuine import of every such text. You will also learn that, however you may have read before, there is not a text within the lids of the Bible which refers to the grave as a place from which material bodies are to be resurrected, or to the dead as the decaying or decayed corpses to which physical life is again to be imparted at some great general judgment-day. You have two resurrections; one, the standing up of the spirit in the spirit-sphere when the natural body falls; the other, that resurrection from spiritual death to spiritual life, when the inward man is made new, when the spiritual triumphs over the natural, when from being dead in trespasses and sins you have become alive in Christ.

A removal of the old error is necessary to an understanding of the higher view. We must clear away the rubbish before we can begin to lay foundations for the edifice of genuine heavenly truth. Now the resurrection into heaven begins to take form and shape. We have two kinds of resurrection into that beautiful land. As I have before said, heaven is a state of the heart. When the heart is a heaven, we carry heaven about with us wherever we go, and make a heaven of every place which is blessed with our presence. But if the heart is a hell, we carry hell with us wherever we go, and make a hell of every locality which becomes cursed with our presence. These things are ingrained; they are a part of ourselves. Our character is our heaven or our hell; and as we have been through life forming within us and weaving into the very tissues of our souls the one or the other, that we

are. Death comes; with it comes a resurrection. The body falls; the spirit stands up. The body corrupts in the grave, and its elements enter into other forms of existence, into soil, grasses, trees, animals, and other bodies. But the soul lives on, enters at once, nor waits for any future day, into a new era of existence, beginning in the other world just where it left off here. It carries its own heart with it, its own character, its own quality. The heaven or hell which it has built up for itself, it bears with it in the *anastasis.* In the one case, it is a resurrection of life; in the other, of condemnation.

But there is another sort of resurrection. It is that from spiritual death to spiritual life. All the while we have lived in the world, if we have been true to ourselves and the Lord, we have been slowly emerging from the delusions of sense into the realities of the higher life; from our proneness to sin, into a love for the Lord's commandments; from tastes and longings ignoble, low and mean, into desires noble, pure and good; from love of the world into love of the neighbor; from love of self into love of God; journeying the while from Egypt to Canaan, from hell to heaven. We started out in life bent down toward sensuality; now we begin to stand spiritually erect. Our hearts, once like the dry bones in *Ezekiel*, become clothed with flesh, stand up and live. This is another *anastasis.* We have been all the while becoming children of the resurrection. This resurrection is always toward heaven; for it is a new standing up of the character, a resurrection of the heart to higher and nobler purposes.

The longer it goes on the more erect the spirit stands.

And if we have done this in the light and power of God, resurrection into the other world at death lands us amid all the beauty and bloom of the heaven on the other shore; stands us among the heavenly-minded who have won their crowns even as we have won ours; renders us heirs of whatever of reward —peace, joy, happiness, salvation, eternal life—waits upon those whose hearts have become renewed after the image of Jesus Christ.

Yes, if we have but partially done this work truthfully and well,—and few have done more,—even then we begin with so much of heaven as we have already won on leaving here, and finish our resurrection into higher states in the world beyond. But heaven must be in us here, or it will never be around us there. It must be a heart's love, or it will never be an outward realization. It must be an inward light, or we shall never see the light of God which irradiates the skies above. The resurrection of the soul out of the body into the spirit world is one thing; that of its elevation into heaven is another. Heaven is its own life and light and joy; the heavenly spirit, in the world beyond, rises into it by its own native tendency. The one resurrection is a great and glorious fact; but the other is greatness, joy and glory in itself. The one gives an end to live for, and a hope to die for; but the other is a present satisfaction, and an eternal peace. The one is a boon beyond aught that is granted to the beasts that perish; but the other is God's own seal of eternal blessedness set within the soul.

III.

WHERE AND WHAT IS HEAVEN?

CHRISTENDOM has had its superstitions no less than heathendom. Christendom has had its traditions, whereby it has made the Word of God of none effect, as certainly as had the Pharisees of old. Let us rise out of this mist of superstition and tradition. Let us dare to grapple with religious questions of profound interest, even though we cannot carry with us the approval of the church authorities, nor the sanction of its creeds. No matter what we may have been taught; we want the truth. No matter what duty the letter of Scripture has in the past been called upon to perform; we want its living spirit.

Tradition and superstition have located heaven in very curious places. They have assigned it a position in some of the stars. They have given it a place in the moon. They have located it in the sun. They have set it upon the upper portion of the concave surface of the sky. They have placed it on this earth renewed by millenial fires in some indefinite future. All these localities are natural and material; but heaven as the eternal residence of the soul, is spiritual. But to render this consistent, they have resurrected our material bodies to clothe the spirit withal once more, in order that it may dwell somewhere in material space.

But suppose it were in the sun; solar conditions would instantaneously destroy these frames of fragile matter. Suppose it were in the stars; they are but flaming suns like the centre of our own planetary system. Suppose it were on the earth; its capacity could neither hold nor support the countless millions who would rise to people its surface; or on the moon,—that is far less in size than the earth. Suppose it were on the upper surface of the sky; but the intelligence of to-day knows there is no such thing; for the sky, augment the power of your telescope as you will, is only space. These things are supposable only to superstition or utter thoughtlessness. To intelligence, they are not supposable.

Yet the Scripture has laid down many a foundation of truth on this and all kindred topics, on which it calls upon us to build. It is a mistake to suppose that the Bible is silent on this momentous theme. True, in its letter it has not located the other world. Inferentially, in its spirit it has. It has given us no set lesson on heavenly geography; yet the conclusions it leaves us to draw from its whole scope and tenor are so plain, that we never could have avoided them had not our minds been pre-occupied by the pagan traditions which have fastened themselves on Christianity.

Let us proceed, however, by the light of the conclusions at which we have already arrived. Let us remember that the soul or spirit is the real man, and the body only the garment with which it is clothed for the purposes of its earth-life,—only the machine within which it dwells and whose various

parts it moves, and of whose cunning mechanism it makes use to walk about and do its earthly work with; that this soul is in the human form, clothed with a spiritual body which, when the earthly is dissolved, stands up in its own sphere, and lives, in appearance and in reality, a thoroughly human life; that it thinks, loves, feels, hears, sees, smells, on the spiritual plane; and if it be heavenly in character, that it dwells in heavenly companionships hereafter, and in that realm of the world beyond which we call heaven.

I have said that the spirit is the real man. When the body dies, it falls away, as it were, from the spirit-man whom it had clothed, and the soul stands up in its own sphere, untrammeled by impediments of flesh. This is the resurrection. Where does this soul clothed in its spiritual body, go? Why, it does not *go* anywhere. Its new relations are right around it. This opaque body that it bore, has shut from sight all its spiritual surroundings. Drop the material body, and the scenery of the spiritual world becomes visible in every direction. There has been no change in space. Place a screen in front of your window, and your vision is confined to the room in which you are; remove the screen and your vision extends over all the landscape to the horizon's utmost verge. This body is the screen before the spirit. The real eyes were in the soul; the eyes of the body were only the windows through which it looked into the world. The illustration, however, is not perfect in every respect. Remove this screen called the body and you cannot look into the world

any more. But another world is around you, which it had previously hidden from your view; and the real man, with all his normal powers restored, without moving a step in space, without floating off to sun, moon, or star, finds himself the centre of a horizon of such wonderful reality and actual verity, that if any spirit were to tell him he were in the land of the dead, he would turn upon him, perhaps, with a smile of incredulity.

Well, then, the soul being the seat of character, and being its own quality, its own character and quality go with it and remain with it in the other sphere of life. What it was the moment before it dropped the body, that it is the moment after. The death of the body does not alter the disposition of the spirit. Has it during its earth-life woven heaven or hell into the fabric of its constitution? So will it be a heaven or a hell in itself the moment it stands upon the opposite shore. Has it left here with a character not fully developed for good or evil—good in grain with much of the stain of earthly evil still left, or bad in grain with many of the world's external refinements and hypocrisies still clinging to it?—so will it enter upon its new state of existence.

But while it lived in this world, although there was a screen before the windows of the soul, so that its vision and action were circumscribed by worldly sights and surroundings, it went not unattended by spiritual companions, nor unsurrounded by spiritual realities. The spiritual and natural worlds are mutually interlocked. The soul stands here as to its natural body upon the natural soil of earth, but

steeped in all the mysteries and verities of the unseen sphere of life. Influences are pressing upon it of which it takes no cognizance, simply because all its interests and energies are going forth into this world; and the curtain which hides the other world from view is not yet withdrawn.

But there is a curious law of mind which ignores completely some of the phenomena of material existence. The spirit is bound by no such thing as space. In that world thought and affection cause presence. Let the thought be good and the affection pure, and we attract, by a sort of spiritual magnetism, angelic spirits; let the thought be evil and the affection defiled, and we are surrounded by infernal spirits. Our invisible associates are those whom our present states of mind and heart attract to our sides. Let desire and thought be concentrated on the effort to draw nearer to God and obey more faithfully his laws, and, imperfect though our efforts be, we are among those on the other side who sympathize with us and urge on the work; while the angels are near at hand with all their holy influences. Let purity and peace serenely rest upon the soul, and we have the angelic host spiritually and really present; though here in the body, our souls are in heaven. Let but the veil drop, and the mansions of the blest in all their beauty stand before our eyes, the heavenly pastures and the mountains of the Lord spread out to our enraptured sight; the love-lit eyes of lovelier hearts look back on eyes of love, the forms of those who have gained celestial heights stand forth in their celestial beauty;

yet we have not walked a rood, nor floated upward through a hand's breadth of natural space ; but find on the spiritual side the law of matter quite ignored, and a very present heaven for our spirit's home.

Heaven rests upon this earth. It is not a different place, but a different realm or sphere of being. The whole after-world rests upon the present world. It is here ; its scenery surrounds us ; its inhabitants cross our path at every turn ; they crowd our houses and our streets ; they stir our hearts to fiendish passions—malice or revenge ; or they whisper thoughts of peace, purity, and contentment, according to the feelings and purposes which we voluntarily cherish. The poet's dream of conjuring into presence the spirits of the dead, has more of truth in it than some are aware of. We are conjuring them into presence, though not to sight, in every thought and purpose and wish and spontaneous effusion of the heart.

To enter upon the spiritual chemistry of other-world substance, or the spiritual geology of other-world earths, is something that must be left until we come openly into that world, and become interested students of spiritual science. The difference between mind and matter no man has ever scientifically analyzed ; yet mind is mind, and matter is matter, and we know that they are totally different. The sun shines in heaven notwithstanding the failure of the scientist to develop its nature and to resolve its constituent elements ; and the soul is a potent fact, and wields this body with marvelous facility and power, though no surgeon has ever yet dissected

it. And so, too, the spiritual world is a world of wonderful reality, and in immediate contact with the earth, though we can resolve it neither into matter nor the constituent elements of matter.

These truths are stated positively. If you credit the Scriptures you cannot doubt them. You who read your Bibles believingly, can you question the truth of the views here presented concerning the reality and presence of other-world existences? When the word of the Lord came unto Ezekiel and the heavens were opened to him and he saw visions of God, where *was* Ezekiel? Did he go off into the distant realms of space? and were the laws of nature suspended that he might be wafted millions of miles in the twinkling of an eye? No: he was among the Jewish captives by the river Chebar in the land of Chaldæa. He simply "looked," so runs the sacred record, and he beheld, within the opened heavens, the marvellous things which he proceeds to narrate.* Was it the natural heavens that the prophet refers to? How can the skies, which are but vacant space, open and disclose moving sights and living scenes? Surely this were more marvelous and incredible than the other. It was the curtain which hid the other world from view then drawn aside. It was that peculiar change of mental state, that turning away of the eyes of the spirit from natural things and the opening of them to the realities of the spiritual world, which is possible and was often permitted to seers and prophets, and which is called

* Ezek. i. 1, 4.

in Scripture being "in the spirit." Ezekiel simply "stood up" on Chaldæan soil, and looked forth into heaven.

When John was "in the spirit" on the Lord's day, and heard the voice of a great trumpet and saw the seven candlesticks and one like unto the Son of man, where was he? When again he was "in the spirit" and a door was opened in heaven, and he saw a throne and Him that sat upon it, where was he? When on other occasions he was "in the spirit" and saw heaven opened, as when he beheld the white horse and the armies of heaven following the rider, or when he gazed upon the descending city, New Jerusalem, where was he?* Why, he was in the Isle of Patmos, and there remained during the continuance of these visions. It was only to be *in the spirit*, which, as proved by the after occurrence, was to have his spiritual sight opened, or to be gifted with the power of introverting his sight from earth to the heavenly realm, when he could view the scenes of the other world without stirring a foot from his position in this. Can we believe that the opening of the heavens was a great rent in the sky, and that these things were seen by John, as they must have been if so seen at all, millions of miles away in the azure blue? Is this reasonable? Does it commend itself to the rational understanding or the common sense of people of our times?

But there is one narrative in Scripture which is

* Rev. i. 9, 10; iv. 1, 2; vi. 2; xxi. 1, 2, etc.

so plain and conclusive that it seems as though it had been placed there for the express purpose of saving us from doubt on this point; and that narrative will stand forever as the lesson of God, leading our minds into correct currents of thought in relation to heaven.

The king of Syria on a certain occasion warred against Israel. But Elisha the prophet, by his timely warnings and prophetic intuitions, saved the Israelites and their king from every snare that was laid for them. The king of Syria was informed that it was through this prophet that his schemes so often failed, and he resolved to capture him. So, learning of Elisha's presence at Dothan, he sent thither a host of horses and chariots and completely surrounded the city. Now Elisha had a servant named Gehazi; and he, rising up early in the morning, discovered this immense army encamped about them. And he was troubled, and said to Elisha: "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Elisha had no misgivings; for he already saw, by the opening of his spiritual sight, his heavenly surroundings. But he desired that his servant should see what he saw. And he prayed and said: "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see." The expression is noteworthy; but it is the usual Scripture expression for this opening of the spiritual eyes that the seer may view the things which surround him in the other world. So, to cite the language of the sacred record, "the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha"—the pro-

tecting hosts of heaven who were to rout the Syrian army by sudden panic and dismay!*

This teaches us very plainly where the angels are; where heaven is; where are all those protecting influences prepared for us by the Lord, and ministered unto us by his heavenly hosts. Given, the opening of the eyes into the spiritual realm, and a state of mind which brings them near, and they are, without reference to natural space, suddenly visible round about us.

Thus we can see how Paul was caught up into the third heaven, and there beheld things unspeakable, without leaving the earth bodily. Thus we can understand how heaven was opened at the baptism of Christ; that it was no opening of natural skies, but the opening of the great world beyond to the inner eyes of the Divine Man. Thus saw Peter, James and John, the transfigured body of Christ, as He was in his inward spirit,—Christ in his glorified state, and the personal forms also of Moses and Elias, now become angels. They were spiritually present; the spiritual sight of the Apostles was opened; they had only to look, and they beheld. Thus came Samuel into the presence of Saul, bidden from the other world. Thus, after his resurrection, did our Lord appear and disappear in that upper room, quite regardless of closed doors, to the wondering eyes of the disciples. He was seen by the opening of their spiritual eyes; when these were closed, He vanished from their sight. So were Moses and Elias and Samuel seen, and so they disappeared.

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* 2 Kings vi. 1–18.

I know how difficult it is to comprehend a real world without the laws of matter and of space ; yet we see that the Scripture view of this subject demands it. If it is true, as Scripture teaches, that the other world is right around us, visible, however, to men on earth by the opening of an inner spiritual sight ; if its inhabitants are with us by affection and thought, the good, bad or mixed, as we draw them to us by our own states or frames of mind ; why, then, in that world natural space must be annihilated. It does not follow, however, that there is no spiritual space. It only follows that spiritual space is determined by thought which is an attribute of spirit, and that earthly space is measured by a surveyor's chain which has the attributes of matter and not of spirit. It is the difference between spirit and matter.

We can only gain general principles here. We shall have a clearer idea of the attributes and laws of the other life when we come to live there consciously. And ideas, it must be remembered, are matters of growth with us. A full-grown man understands much better how day and night are formed by the revolution of the earth on its axis, than the child who is informed of the fact for the first time, and who always thought that the sun travelled round the earth each passing day. So reflection and constant recurrence to the thought will, after a while, thoroughly familiarize the mind with the idea of a spirit-world without space that can be measured with a yard-stick, and with space that can be measured by thought and affection ; with the idea that near-

ness of mental state causes presence not only between spirits in the other world, but also between the angels of heaven and the souls of people on earth, and not feet, rods and miles; and yet that the appearance of space there is just as clearly marked as it is here.

So the question, Where is heaven?—is answered by sacred Scripture in such words as our earth-life affords us. Could we speak the language of heaven, perhaps we would have better words with which to clothe these ideas. But in heaven we shall also have a better experience; so for complete realizations we must wait, though in part we may gain partial ones here.

The other question, What is heaven?—is a large one. As we have said, geologically or chemically, or by analysis of any earthly science, the question must remain forever unanswered. The reason is obvious. Spirit is not matter, and it has its own distinct laws. Heaven is not earth, and it exists under conditions utterly diverse, under circumstances totally unlike those of earth. Its essential constitution is one *sui generis*—peculiarly its own. Then again the Word of God is not a scientific treatise. It was not only not intended as a text-book for physical science, but it does not pretend to teach spiritual things after a scientific manner. We must not ask it; we must not look for it. It was not intended to furnish the intellect with theological definitions and rules, but to illumine it; not to be so much a text-book of theology as a means of bring-

ing us into spiritual union with the Lord, and under the influence of the angels.

Yet its principles are broad and clear. But we oftener get them into us by our hearts warming towards them, than by our reasoning powers being exercised upon them. And if we start aright, these principles grow and expand within us, and gradually become better seen and more fully comprehended. The kingdom of heaven is likened "to a grain of mustard-seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."* The Bible is full of seed-truths, which, sown in the mind, will become great in due time, and grow into a tree of knowledge with spreading and varied branches. So is it with regard to heaven. The subject is not laid open scientifically nor didactically; but all through the Scriptures are scattered these seed-truths concerning heaven and the heavenly life, which, if permitted to take root in the mind, will develop into a satisfactory solution of questions which, on their first reception, it is hard to answer.

Then we find not only that the soul is the real man, but that the soul-world is the real world; that, while earth is our abode for a brief period, heaven, if we attain unto it, is our abode for eternity; that while earthly joys are spasmodic and fleeting, heavenly joys are everlasting; that, where-

* Matt. xiii. 31.

as on earth we are (if followers of the Lord) constantly battling to overcome our evils, in heaven we have the blessed heart-rest of evil overcome; that while earth is a scene of disorder and strife, and, to a certain degree, of unrest even to its purest and loveliest souls, the happiness of heaven—there being no contact with evil there—is supreme and unalloyed.

These truths and a hundred kindred ones which we find cropping out from the letter of Scripture, like grains of surface gold indicating rich veins of ore beneath the surface, which patient digging (that is, reverent *living* of the truth we know) will ultimately disclose. And these things are so by reason of the central truth, that heaven is, essentially, the Lord's life and light within the soul, and that, therefore, its full and perfect development, as found in the abodes of the blest beyond the grave, absolutely *must* include all these and innumerable other joys which grow out of a heart-state of purity and peace.

But we find even more than this. Startling as the proposition may seem to those who have allowed the traditions of centuries and the superstitions of a crude religious era to constitute their creed, heaven is a real world of sight and sense and sound. Though not material, it is more real than this world; and on precisely the same principle that the soul is more real than the body.

If the soul or spirit is real, must not the world in which it dwells be real, too? Do we doubt the existence of the soul, because our fingers cannot grasp it? Do I doubt your soul's existence because I cannot lay this hand of clay upon its head?—because

it requires an opening of my spiritual sight, similar to that recorded of Ezekiel, Zechariah, Paul, or John, before I can see it? Then why doubt concerning the spiritual world as a real existence with inhabitants and other objects of reality, albeit its nature is peculiarly its own, because these natural eyes cannot view its spiritual scenes? Ezekiel saw that world; Zechariah, Paul, and John saw it. They saw it as something visible and tangible. They saw its temples and palaces, its rivers and mountains, its fountains, plains and trees. They say so; and they say they saw these things in heaven. "The heavens were opened," says Ezekiel, "and I saw visions of God." "And behold a door was opened in heaven," says John, and "a throne was set in heaven and one sat upon the throne;" and again, "I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse." And they, each of them, fill many chapters in relating what they saw. And angels are clothed; for among the many related instances, the angel who sat at the sepulchre had on a shining garment, and the four and twenty elders that John saw in heaven, were clothed in white raiment. He and the earlier seers saw in heaven clouds and rainbows, books and harps, thrones and crowns, horses and chariots. All the prophets, too, heard voices—the voices of the angels, some of them the sound of trumpets, some the rush of mighty winds. Everywhere, when we read of heaven, we hear of it as a region of sights and sounds. But according to the sacred record one must be "in the spirit"—must have the inner

senses of the spirit opened in order to witness these spiritual phenomena.

The argument, then, is briefly this: that while what the prophets saw was limited and only permitted for the sake of the prophetic meaning of the visions, or as seed-truths, not as full revealments concerning the future life, yet they were real; that because they were visions, or things seen on the spiritual plane, that does not deprive them of their reality: that because they are invisible to the bodily sense, that does not deprive them of their tangibility so far as the spiritual senses are concerned; that spiritual things may have form and shape and visibility and sound on their own plane, as certainly as material things on theirs; that the spiritual world hidden from this, has its scenery and surroundings, its voices and its thunderings, its perfumes and its incense, cognizable, however, only by the spiritual senses. It is not mapped out in its details in the Scripture, but the suggestion and clear intimation of it all is actually there. As the Word of God is true, this is true.

In the great Hereafter, friend will meet friend; love will respond to love; music will charm the soul with melody; scenes beautiful and grand will display their forms before enchanted eyes. They will be more perfect than those witnessed here, more impressive, more living, more real, because spirit is more real, living and perfect than matter. I cannot doubt this, for the Word of God has so disclosed; and I have more faith in the Lord's Word

than in the most venerable traditions, or the most ingenious hypothesis ever invented by man.

There is a tangible reality in the heaven about which the Lord has taught us in his Word. We can look forward to it with an assurance of its splendor and its peace. It looms up before the mind, not as something fantastic, unreal and evanescent, like the floating phantasmagoria of a bright and passing dream, but as a region where the soul can find a human joy and live as a human being. As it is the seat of God's presence, his creative power will fill it with all things that can delight the eye, excite the activity of a regenerated mind, or answer the cravings of the noblest desire and purest love. It is the home of people made pure and good. It is the everlasting abode of men become receptive of the light of heavenly wisdom and the warmth and sweetness of heavenly love. It is a state worth all our exertions while on earth to live for, and a home worth all our hopes and prayers to die for. But after all, it is a question of life, not faith ; and we must grow into heaven, by a purification of the spirit through the Lord's strength, else we shall never realize the promises of his Word. Let heaven be a lesson of daily life to us while on earth. For it is a thing of the heart ; it is a struggle for nobility of character—purity and rectitude of purpose ; it is an uprooting of innate selfishness ; it is a love for all mankind ; it is a life in the spirit of the Lord. So living, we obtain heaven here ; so dying, we enjoy it hereafter.

IV.

THE LIFE OF HEAVEN.

WHILE Jesus was preparing the minds of his disciples for the coming event of the crucifixion, and comforting them with words designed to heighten their hopes and strengthen their faith, He asked them to believe in Him; to have implicit confidence in his promises and his work. If they would do this, He more than intimated that all would be well. He directed their thoughts to heaven; it was one of the most comforting reflections to which He could lead them. "In my Father's house," He said, "are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." It was necessary that He should pass out of this earth-life, in order that He might arrange the heavenly homes of his followers—of all who should ever be his followers. No matter at this time, why. But a good part of that work consisted in moulding the hearts of his disciples into a heavenly form; and this could only be done by his laying down his earth-life. He said to Peter, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

But it was curious that He should mention the fact, as one of his lessons of great comfort, that in his Father's house there were "many mansions;" curious, because to the average mind of Christen-

dom it has not seemed to prove a source of comfort. The popular belief has been, that heaven is one uniform level—one unvaried life, the same for all. The happiness of heaven has been thought to consist in the hosts of the redeemed, undistinguished by character, standing before the throne with harps in hand, singing without cessation eternal praises to God. This and other equally strange ideas not consonant with human nature, nor in accordance with the best desires of the heart, have been among the vain imaginings of men.

But Scripture, rightly interpreted, will never be found to ignore human nature. The infinite diversity of tastes, desires, characteristics, sympathies—the intense individuality of the human soul whereby each person who ever lived is distinguished from every other, is a birthright vouchsafed to man from God himself. God-given, it is right and proper that it should be so. As there were never two sets of features exactly alike, as you may wander the earth's surface all over and pick out your brother or next friend from every other man's brother and friend, because he is, in appearance, unlike every other man that ever was born ; so might you wander the world over and never find two hearts, two minds or two souls exactly alike. Each man is himself and nobody else. Each woman is herself, distinctly individualized from all other women. And what is remarkable, the more civilized a race is, the more strongly individualized are its members ; and the more brutalized, the less strongly so ; until, as you descend lower in the scale of creation from men to

beasts, and from thence to birds, fishes, insects, the less easy it is to recognize a difference between different individuals of the same class. But perfect similarity is never found. Individuality weakens but is never lost; even in the leaves of the forest or the sands of the sea it never becomes totally obliterated.

But what is still more strange, experience will demonstrate to those who will take note thereof, that the more virtuous, the more lovely in character, the more holy in life, the more earnest in deeds of good one becomes, the more this law of distinct individuality deepens, the more marked the peculiarities of character, the more different and clearly defined every individual becomes from every other. There is no such thing as absolute likeness of quality or character throughout creation. And as the soul or spirit, and not the body, is the real man, and as this is what goes to heaven and not its earthly vestment, it is clear that no two persons in heaven can be precisely alike.

And as there are distinctions of individuals, so there are also general distinctions into classes. We observe the division of the human race into several families, as Caucasians, Indians, Mongolians, and Negroes. We observe each of these divided into nations and peoples, each again of their own peculiar type, of their own peculiar class of intellect, taste, habit, custom, civilization; and each even of so marked a physical type as to render it not difficult to distinguish them in a mixed crowd. Even in the same town or neighborhood the families divide off

into circles and groups, attracted and arranged by some law of affinity which the outward eye cannot detect. If it is partly what the world calls accident, it is largely mutual attraction.

This was the reason why our Lord declared that in his Father's house, or heaven, there are many mansions, or various classes of individuals. Call them societies, congregations, communities, cities, or what you please, the idea remains. The expression is based on a Jewish custom. A family or tribe, or the descendants of any patriarch were called a house. Thus, "The house of David" is often used as an expression to include all the lineage or family of David. When the Lord said, "I have sworn unto the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice," He does not mean the edifice in which Eli resided, but his lineage, race, kindred or tribe. And when we read that "there was war between the house of David and the house of Saul," reference is had to the descendants of those kings, their families and followers. It would have been as well to render the text (John xiv. 1) above cited, "In my Father's house are many chambers;" and this (to translate the metaphor or correspondence) might be paraphrased thus: "In the family of God are many families;" or, "In the congregation of the righteous are many congregations;" or, "In the Lord's heaven are many heavens." And thus we find the pith and marrow of this text agreeing with what we know of human nature, its demands and necessities, and of the

Lord's merciful care to adjust all things to its inherent laws and needs.

No: Heaven is not an unvarying level. If it were, the Lord would have told us, as He says. But He has not told us so, but has told us quite the contrary. This is a more important truth than at first might seem. For on this we build all our ideas of the life of the better world. There is no aristocracy in heaven. He that seeks to be greatest there, will certainly find himself least; and he who essays to take the chief seat at the marriage supper of regenerate souls, will unquestionably be invited to occupy the lowest seat. This also is our Saviour's teaching. There are no arbitrary class distinctions there, based on the doctrine or conceit, "I am better than thou."

But evidently if Hottentots go to heaven, Hottentots and the most refined souls of Christendom would not dwell together, simply because of their dissimilarity, and the discomfort that would be mutually caused thereby. No feeling of pride or aristocracy would enter into this arrangement, since such feelings belong to hell, not to heaven; and no one who entertains them could find a place among the blest. It would be simply the spiritual law of attraction, whereby like ones are drawn together and bound together into societies.

We may, therefore, expect to find heaven as diverse in its societies and congregations, its nations, tongues and peoples, as earth, leaving out earth's evil. We shall find that all there are good, and that all at last become acknowledgers and followers of the Lord,

but after an infinite variety of ways. Some will be more highly regenerated than others. Some will be peculiarly in the love of one use, some of another. Some will have one set of marked peculiarities, some another. Some will be peculiarly of the affectionate and loving class, some will be markedly intellectual and keen-sighted; some will be in mere obedience, doing right simply because they are told to do right. There is a place for every follower of the Lord. If your spiritual nature is developed to a high degree, so much the better and higher your position; if to a less degree, still there is a place. Peter and John and Thomas were essentially different in character; but our Lord had a place and a use in heaven for each. So each one of us who is to be saved, will have his place in heaven. Our Lord has prepared a place for each. But there are "many mansions;" and the place of one will not be the place of another. Every one's place will depend on his own character, or his mind and heart peculiarities.

The Bible, as I have before remarked, does not in its letter lay down minute doctrines nor indulge in amplified descriptions. It lays down broad principles. It leads you to a certain point, and then says (in substance), "Think, reflect, make your own deductions;" and there it stops. So with reference to the great doctrine of heaven. It gives us principles and asks us to build on them. It tells us that heaven is a spiritual realm consisting of innumerable societies; and we reflect upon human nature, and see in a moment why.

Now there is another doctrine of our Lord, which

leads us on beyond this, and unfolds for us the main idea of life in heaven. It does not say, "Angels spend their time in doing thus and so," but it gives us the principle on which we are justified in building. This doctrine is set forth in the parable of the sheep and goats.* The Lord is judging those who have left this world; and in rendering judgment, He is represented as explaining the principle according to which the separation takes place. It is likened to the case of a shepherd who is dividing his sheep from his goats. The heirs of hell are compared to the goats, those of heaven to the sheep. The infernal kingdom into which the lost go, is here the left hand; the heavenly kingdom which is for the righteous is called the right hand.

Now the great dividing line between angels and their opposites, the great principle upon which the division takes place, is unequivocally set forth. There is no circumlocution about it; we have it in the plainest language. It is not faith alone, nor predestination, nor belonging to any sect which assumes to be THE CHURCH; nor is it joining the church, nor any peculiar form of baptism, nor any other distinction which men have made. Let us see, then, what it is.

Our Lord who alone is able to judge all hearts, says to those assembled on his right hand, that is, in heaven, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave

* Matt. xxv. 31–46.

me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." But as the mass of men have never even had the opportunity to do such things for their Lord, He explains further what He means by this, and says: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." But to those who are on his left hand, to the lost, in remanding them to their destination, He says: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." But as the opportunity to do or not to do so personally to the Lord, may never have been presented, they also receive the explanation: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." "And these," it is added—that is, they who did not these things—"shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous"—they who did them—"into life eternal."

Now, it is not to be supposed that feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, and ministering to the stranger, the sick and imprisoned, are all the duties of life which qualify us for heaven. But these, as important ministrations of charity, stand for all the well-known duties of life. They stand also for the correlative spiritual duties of ministering to those who are hungry for genuine disinterested love, or thirsty for God's truth;

to those who are spiritually naked, lacking the robes of righteousness ; who are strangers to the just demands of the Lord's precepts, and the glorious truths of his holy Word ; who are spiritually sick because of sin, and are prisoners in that worst of all Bastiles, self and the world. In fact, the truly Christian life consists in living for others, in ministering to others, in considering the rights of others, in loving and serving others. The true Christian is not in the love of self, but in the love of use ; not in the love of the world and its pleasures for his own sake, but in the love of seeing how much use he can make of the world in ministering to the good of others, and to their legitimate pleasures. This love of use, this love for the neighbor and his good, the Lord accepts as personal devotion to Himself. You cannot love the neighbor without loving the Lord. The one leads up to the other, and culminates in it. And the Lord demands of you a spirit which prompts you to serve your neighbor, which you can do ; and He accepts this in lieu of that personal service to Himself, which you cannot give.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Heaven is essentially in the heart. Heaven in the heart, is the spirit of unselfishness manifested in a love of being of real use to others in all the walks and ways of life. Earth is the school in which man is placed to cultivate this spirit, and make it his own. If he does this, he gains a residence in the heavenly world beyond the grave, because his

heart is in complete accord with the spirit of those who dwell there, and which makes it heaven ; if he does not, he gravitates to the other side and enters into the companionship of the wicked, simply because his heart is in accord with the spirit of selfishness which dwells among them.

We conclude, therefore, that as the very spirit which fits the soul for heaven is the love of use,—the love of ministering in all possible and imaginable ways to the good of others, that spirit constitutes the very life of heaven. I do not mean its sentimental life merely, but its actual, practical, every-day work and worship. This, of course, ignores the literal standing before the throne, the endless striking of the celestial harps, the everlasting psalm and song. Why not ? For these are quite useless things. Of what possible benefit can they be ? Can they do good to God, the perfect One ? You cannot do good to Him ; and because you cannot, He has told you that your heirship to heaven depends on your loving and doing good to the neighbor ; and He accepts that as good done to Himself. But the spirit of heaven is use ; the life of heaven is use ; the love that prevails in heaven is the love of use. Take off your golden crowns, hang up your harps, and go forth into heaven to see what good your hands may find to do. You will find it a happier life, a nobler and more exalted life, a purer and more God-like life than any psalm the lips can sing. The Son of Man, your God and Lord, came to earth to minister and serve. He found other work than merely singing psalms. He is your exemplar, both

for earth and heaven. That spirit acquired is the highest life known in all the universe. It is the source of the purest and most exalted bliss that can thrill the heart. It is the only heaven known to angel or to God. It is difficult? That does not alter the truth. It is contrary to the prevailing opinion of men? That does not detract from the fact that it is the plain teaching of the Lord. It is impossible? That is the suggestion of a false and evil spirit; the whisper of the serpent of sensuality in the Eden of your own heart, tempting you as a son of Adam to believe that God has lied.

To give even a general idea of the employments of the angels were out of the question here. They *must be usefully* employed. A good man without employment is a very unhappy being. The happiness of heaven, then, must unquestionably result from useful employment. True, we shall there be lifted above the necessity of the coarse manual labor of earth. Here we please the eye, and touch the heart, and refine the feelings, and give comfort and delight to others by the labor of our hands. But there where toil is unknown we shall perform these pleasing duties in a less laborious way. The best work of life is, after all, addressed to the mind and heart, not to the body. Our social intercourse, our conversation, our instruction, our influence on our children and friends, our worship, and innumerable other things, are for the improvement and joy of the soul and not for the mere comfort or ease of the body. These are what will follow us to heaven. We shall drop all those labors that the body and its support

required, and shall direct our energies to the cultivation and improvement of the soul. Our fields will bloom without toil under the sunlight of God, but the broad field of inquiry into all subjects of mental or spiritual interest will have enlarged a thousandfold. Is the soul the real man and the body merely the machine through which it speaks and acts in the world, and shall not the soul which is the only thing that survives death and was the only thing that did the speaking and acting here, enjoy there the pleasures of conversation on the highest themes? The angels talked to the patriarchs, prophets and apostles; and shall not we, if we become angels, converse one with another? The angels recognized Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, John, Peter, and Paul; and shall not we, when we come to angels' estate, recognize each other? Does the soul lose its identity because the material body which was only a temporary garment, has dropped from it? The difference of character is ingrained in the spirit, and the male mind is masculine and the female mind feminine by virtue of their constitution as spiritual beings; and shall there not be distinctions of sex in heaven? The holiest marriages on earth are not of convenience, or for money or personal attractions, or from animal instinct, but from mutual adaptibility, and from genuine sympathy of mind with mind, and because it is misery to the parties to live apart; and will there be no true wedded life in heaven? The happiest condition of life on earth is found in the family ties of a peaceful and well-ordered home; and shall those connections

which true hearts most yearn for here, be utterly obliterated there? Were the natural body the real man, and all there is of us, and were these yearnings and instincts seated in the body, we should answer, Yes. But as the soul is the real man, and they are all seated in the soul, and it is the soul which goes to heaven, the answer must be, No.

If the purer and nobler people become, the less they love these ties of marriage, family, home and friends, then we might easily believe them obliterated from the life of heaven. But since the contrary is the case, and since we become more heavenly-minded the purer these ties become and the more we love them, therefore we may reasonably conclude that all these ties exist in the better land. And so they do. There, where our real selves and our truly human instincts have freer play, are wedded lives and family ties; homes, companionships, and friends, the pleasures of mental culture, the joys of heart refinement, with a better field for the cultivation of our spiritual nature, which the absence of care for bodily necessities must afford. Added to this, the angels are ministering spirits to men—so the Scriptures assure us. As the vast caravan of departed souls continues its daily march from earth to the world beyond, they have the education of such of its men, women and children as are willing to be instructed and led into a preparation for the life of heaven. Were they present with the patriarchs, and are they not with us? Watched they by the cradle of John, and follow they not with us from the cradle to the grave? Sang they to

Bethlehem's shepherds, and have they never chanted an anthem (though inaudible) to any wondering, watching heart of earth from that glad day to this? Rejoiced they over the repentant sinners of Jesus' day, and feel they no interest in those of our own?

Let us not deceive ourselves. Let us not shut our ears at the bidding of human traditions, to the voice of truth which speaks from the holy Word of God. The life of heaven is a wondrously human and social life. Far more so than that of earth, since it is purer, holier, more unselfish, fuller of disinterested love; far more so, since it is unalloyed by the earthly taint that so often mars the pleasures of this world's social sphere. Minds are brighter, intellects are keener, hearts are holier, purposes are nobler, worship is purer, the whole field of heavenly science is more open for study and contemplation. Melodies more full of celestial harmonies than earth e'er dreamed of; poetry whose rhythmic flow is flooded with soul that never yet has reached the world; ministries to lower spirits and to men, so gentle, tender and loving, that it only shows how mad we are to reject them as we do; sabbaths of worship all filled with the spirit of the Lord, to rouse their noblest endeavors and thrill with joy their inmost souls; all services that elevate the angel or tend to ennoble man, of whatever kind those services may be;—these, and perhaps a thousand uses yet unknown and incredible to men on earth, may occupy the angelic hosts to all eternity. But each, working in his own way, according to his

own ability and on his own plane, be that plane high or low.

And what of the scenery amid which the angels live? We have the testimony of Scripture that scenery does exist there. In the visions of Ezekiel, Zechariah and John, who were in the spirit, and beheld heaven opened and saw visions of God, we find, it is true, but a limited field, and that for defined and special purposes; but we observe, nevertheless, those visions peopled with angelic beings conversant with the affairs of heaven and men; filled with mountains and valleys, hills and plains, rivers and seas, houses and temples. This reveals the fact that heaven is a real world of scenery palpable to the senses. It must be so. Angels would scarcely be gifted with sight if there were nothing to see; or with hearing if there were nothing to hear. But Paul teaches us, as before remarked, that we are not raised with natural, but with spiritual bodies. Our senses, then, in the other life, are of a spiritual, not of a natural order. Now spirit through material eyes can see material things; but, evidently, through spiritual eyes, only spiritual things. These prophets of old say they were "in the spirit" when they had their visions. That is, what they saw was cognizable by the spiritual not by the bodily sight. There is but one conclusion: Spirit is essentially different from matter. As a spiritual body differs from a natural body and spiritual sight from natural sight, so the objects of spiritual vision differ essentially from those of natural vision. But this makes them none the

less real on their own plane of existence. This much we get from Scripture.

Now let us appeal to our own knowledge of the operations of the soul. We observe that the spirit of man has the power of creating its own world of vision. Each one's experience has taught him this. I refer to the phenomena of sleep and dreams. Set at rest the bodily senses, and the creative powers of the soul are quickened. Even when awake, think! Think of a house you plan, of an act you contemplate, of anything, no matter what, and the scene or object is projected before your mind's eye. You cannot think without projecting a mental picture before the soul. Try it, and you will see. But this is comparatively dim, and it is only the present thought. Sleep, however—let each bodily thought become quiescent; dream—and your then present state of mind takes form in a living world. The reality of it is almost startling. In your dream you would laugh at any one's questioning its reality. It is only when you return to the world that you doubt its actual existence. Yet that was a creation of the soul or mind. The temporary state of thought and feeling in which it then was, no matter from what cause suggested or by what accident produced, spread itself around you, beautifully pictured before your vision, or fantastically fleeting, according to circumstances. In sleep, however, there is a soul-slumber as well as a body-slumber. Some faculties are alive, some dormant. Your world is more or less imperfect, evanescent, unreal. It only proves the power of the soul, on its own plane and in its

own sphere, to create worlds. But strip the soul of its body entirely ; set it fully awake and alive to its wants and necessities on its own plane, arouse it to full activity and volition, and will you not find your outward soul-world to be a work of creation wrought out by spiritual law through your own mind ? Every object will be real—all things tangible ; not indeed to the body, but to the spirit. Your world will then be what you are ; your house just what you want it ; your garden blooming with the flowers of your choice. The concentrated creation of a society of angels would surround them with permanent scenery, the precise creation of their own loves and tastes, the exact correspondences of their own thoughts and affections. It would be a spirit world; and that is the kind the spirit wants ; not evanescent, because according to the combined, general, fixed state of that angelic society ; surpassingly lovely, because in correspondence with hearts filled with the breath of love ; harmonious with the feelings, tastes and thoughts, because actually brought forth by them. It is not unreasonable to believe from what we know of our own souls and their creative operations, that God creates the phenomena of the world beyond through the spirits of those who dwell there ; that the scenery of heaven is a visible embodiment of the pure thoughts, the unselfish loves and the heavenly tastes of the angels themselves.

But, think of this as we may, the Scripture testimony, so far as it goes, is clear and explicit. On this, then, repose your faith ; here rest your hopes ;

on this build your firm foundation; and you shall have a heaven presented for your acceptance, so real, so human, so life-like, so beautiful, that if you will only live for it, and regulate your lives according to what you really know of it, you shall find all that is worth having, all that is worth living for or gaining, all that justifies the Lord in creating us to live forever, sweetly centred in its bosom.

V.

CONNECTION OF EARTH WITH HEAVEN.

HAVING followed the angels from their beginnings as men on earth, through their development and resurrection into the heavenly land, let us now return with them again to the world.

That was a beautiful dream which Jacob had, as he tarried all night at Bethel on his way from Beersheba to Haran.* With stones for his pillow, he lay himself down to sleep. He dreamed; and behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; the angels of God were ascending and descending on it, and above it stood the Lord.

The incidents of this dream are not related as the phantasmagoria of the brain. They are spoken of as an absolute revealment of the Lord and his angels. There is an actual prophecy there recorded as having been positively and divinely delivered; and that prophecy was in due time fulfilled. I believe there is not an event recorded in the Scripture which does not contain a lesson of the utmost importance to man. I believe that, when viewed in their true spirit, these lessons culled from widely-sundered portions of the Bible, will be found harmonious in

* Gen. xxviii. 10–12.

all their parts. This position we will now proceed to test, by briefly reviewing the Scripture doctrine of the connection of angels with men.

But first let us remember a point which has already been considered: that there is no Bible doctrine of angels originally created such; that angels are simply regenerated men; that they began their career on earth; were born as you and I were born; and were developed into spirits of purer, nobler and diviner mould through the labor, struggle and battles of this world's life, as you and I will be if we are true to the Lord and ourselves.

With what Jacob believed in relation to this matter we are not concerned. With what he saw, we are. And we may rest assured that the Jewish patriarch was not more under the protecting care of the Lord's providence than any other individual of his race; not more than any other child of God that ever lived. The Lord is not partial in his dealings with men; the laws of his providence are universal both in their nature and application; and if He and his angels followed Jacob from Bethel to Haran, He follows every one that ever was born with the angels of his mercy in every journey of life; in all their developments of mind and heart; in the least event and incident in the grand journey itself, which each must make from the cradle to the grave. It is the peculiarity of the Bible that the lesson to the individual is a lesson to the entire race; that the spiritual or supernatural experiences of one man, are Divine teachings for all. That is why they are recorded. Were it not so, the record would be useless.

What happened to Jacob, then, has been set down for our instruction; otherwise it had been better left out. What happened to Jacob is more than an idle dream; otherwise it were no part of the Word of God. What happened to him is an eternal truth of universal application; otherwise it takes its place with the fairy tales of the nursery.

I dwell upon this, because it is so common to accept the Scripture in a general way as the Word of God, and to relegate to the realm of fancy some of its most valuable teachings; to acknowledge in a certain sense the hand of God in the production of the Book, yet entertain a mental reservation that whatever in it is supernatural is a sort of Hebrew mythology. But this supernatural element is the very foundation upon which the whole edifice is built. Take it away, and you have no Bible. Take it away, and there are no connecting links to hold its parts together. Eliminate from the Scripture its supernatural element, and you have taken all the Scripture out. It is the one consistent idea running through the sacred volume from Genesis to Revelation, which gives it form and coherence and meaning. And you might as well undertake to write a history of Rome on the theory that Rome itself was a myth, as to assert the verity of the Scripture with the mental reservation that the supernatural element, including God and his angels and their ways with men, is the vain conceit of human imagination.

The dream of Jacob contains an important lesson. And to those to whom, as Jacobs of a later day, the

sun of religion has set, and, in relation to the things of heaven and God, the obscurity of a mental night now rests upon their hearts, and whose heads are pillowed on the hard stones of the truths of science and nature and the bare letter of the Word, unrelieved by the higher light, a dream of this kind would be a good and unexpected gift.

The ladder of Jacob's dream represented the ladder of life—the path from earth to heaven. It was set upon earth and its top reached to heaven, to show that the great journey of existence begins on earth; and, if rightly traveled, reaches by constant climbing unto heaven. The angels did not descend and ascend; they ascended and descended. This teaches us that we must first rise to angelhood, first ascend in mind and thought and acquired purity to heaven, where, in the after life, we are accepted as angels of God; and then we may descend again to earth to become the ministering spirits of men. Above it stands the Lord, watching in his providence the pathway of man, and making use of those mortals who have attained to angelhood, as the constant ministers and messengers of his mercy and care. So impressed was Jacob with the reality of his vision, that he exclaimed as he awoke, "Surely the Lord is in this place." And he erected a pillar on the spot to commemorate the event; and he called the place Beth-El—the house of God.

It was not the first, but one of the earliest lessons of the Lord to the patriarchs, teaching them of God's constant care of man by the ministry of angels. He had, however, previously vouchsafed to Abraham

a vision of these angels, who entertained them unawares. Lot had been led forth by the ministry of angels, and saved from the impending doom of Sodom. Hagar had been met at the fountain and comforted in her sore distress by an angel of the Lord. There could be no doubt but that it was the express desire of the Lord to impress upon the Jewish mind, as at that time the only acceptors of any immediate revelation from Him, two or three leading ideas, to be more fully developed under later dispensations. These were, the existence of one God; his constant watchfulness over all the ways of men; and his use of angels as ministering spirits to protect and care for them.

The germs of truth must be implanted somewhere in that age of universal error; and the Jews were chosen as the race to whom they were to be delivered. How far they themselves believed in the immortality of the soul; whether they were aware of the fact that these angels had once, like themselves, been men on earth—these questions do not concern us here. It is the fact that the great truths of the existence of Jehovah and his angels, and of their watchful care over men, were so carefully taught and so solemnly recorded, with which we have to do. These are not mythological statements. They are recorded as solemn facts. And by the angels whom Abraham entertained on the plains of Mamre, by him who announced to Sarah the birth of her child, by the comforter of Hagar in the wilderness, by the saviors of Lot at Sodom, by the angelic voice which counseled Abraham to withhold the knife

from the bosom of his son, by him who went before the servant of Isaac to make all things favorable for his marriage, we are taught that there is such a thing as the ministration, visible and invisible, of angels with men, and that there exists an intimate connection of the inhabitants of the other world with those of this. Then came the vision in which it was reasserted to Jacob at Bethel. Next to the announcement of the existence and unity of God, it is the primary and leading truth of revelation; asserted not once or twice, but, we might say, a thousand times; a doctrine which surrounds and entwines itself with every important event narrated in Scripture; an absolute and reiterated truth of God.

Is it not so? Through the long journey of forty years from Egypt to Canaan, angels went before the hosts of Israel, covering their retreat on the one hand and guarding their advance on the other. "Behold," saith the Lord, "I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared;"* and in the language of Scripture, an angelic host is often called *an angel*. Were they not with the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan? For again the Lord says: "I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite."† All through the chronicle of sacred history these angels reappear. With a mighty host they surrounded the

* Ex. xxiii. 20. † Ex. xxxiii. 2.

city of Dothan to take their part in the discomfiture of the Syrians. To Joshua, at the siege of Jericho, the leader of the invisible host who interfered in the contest for the protection of the Israelites, appeared and proclaimed himself the captain of the Lord's host. At Sennacherib it was an angel who totally destroyed the Assyrian army. And to Daniel the angel Gabriel announced the doctrine of ministering angels presiding even over the destinies and affairs of nations.

It was an angel who rebuked Israel at Bochim and who obstructed the wicked path of Balaam. It was an angel who announced to Gideon the protection of the Lord, and who instructed Manoah and his wife concerning their son Samson. It was an angel that came to the deliverance of the three Hebrew brethren who were cast by the order of Nebuchadnezzar into the furnace of fire. Isaiah and Jeremiah, Elijah and Elisha, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah were, at all times, under their instruction, protection and guidance. To catalogue completely the instances of angel ministrations announced in the Old Testament, were almost to sum up the entire record.

Nor does this doctrine of the ministry of angels close with the Jewish dispensation. Neither is it treated by Jesus, by his apostles, or by the Gospels, as a mere tradition of the Jews. But angels appear with full activity in the remarkable events which accompany the ushering in and establishment of the Christian dispensation. By an angel was the birth of John the Baptist foretold to his father; by

an angel the birth of Jesus to Mary of Nazareth. Angels espoused the cause of Mary to Joseph, warned the latter of the wrath of Herod, sent him with the young child, Jesus, into Egypt, and commanded his return. Angels sang their rejoicings over Jesus in the presence of the Bethlehem shepherds, ministered to the Saviour after his temptations in the wilderness, watched by his tomb at the resurrection, comforted his disciples after He had risen.

Nor yet, in the establishment of the infant church, was it to and in behalf of Jesus alone that they came. The Lord sent his angels to the relief of the apostles; to Peter and John, to effect their release from prison; to Philip, the deacon, to guide him to the Ethiopian eunuch of Candace, the queen; to Peter a second time, to deliver him from prison and chains; to Paul, to cheer him and through him his companions when threatened with shipwreck.

Now why are these things related here? Why are any truths recorded on the pages of the sacred chronicles? Why, but to pass down to us and to the ages yet unborn, the truth of God in relation to matters whereof we should otherwise be ignorant. And how, with such an array of facts before us, can we—we, I mean, who believe in the inspiration of holy Writ—how can we doubt the truth of the intimate connection—daily and hourly, yea, momentarily—which exists between angels and men?

It is of small moment to us that angels interposed on behalf of Abraham or Jacob, Peter or Paul, if they care nothing for us. It does not interest us to be told that the providences of God are partial and

for favorites only. Nay, the interest of the chronicle centres in this: that these recorded facts are set down as examples of a universal truth, and as proofs of a universal law. That is one evident reason why the angels were with these men as open and visible manifestations; why they were permitted to come forth from behind the veil in these special instances, and make their ministrations manifest. Actual facts strike the mind with more force than mere asserted truths; and, as recorded events, they become lessons that burn themselves into the mind in indelible lines.

The word angel means, in the original, *a messenger*. It is sometimes applied even to the spirits of evil—as in the expression, "The devil and his angels." But in its better and usual sense, it means a messenger of God to man. And this is why the spirits of the just made perfect were called *angels*, because so large and important a part of their work was as messengers to men, and as ministers of God's providences in man's behalf.

That these recorded instances were exemplifications of a universal truth, the Scripture has not left us to doubt. The Psalms of David give, in the language of inspired prophecy, all those truths which the narrative portions of the written Word teach by incidents and events. The Psalms sing, in the summarized language of Divine law, the pith and meaning of the sacred histories. They take up, therefore, the visits of the angels to the patriarchs and prophets, and universalize that idea which might otherwise seem partial, in the beautiful words, "The

angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them;"* or in those other words of hope and love, "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways!"† There is now no more appearance of partiality. A thousand recorded events are summed into one universal truth; and a seeming special favor to special favorites of God, becomes a fact which has an interest and an application for all mankind in all ages, and for each and all. This, too, we know by the joy which exists in heaven over one repentant sinner.‡ How near and watchful must they be, when not a man, or woman, or a child, can repent of a single sin, but the angels of God know of it, and rejoice in the fact. This, too, we know, by the assurance of our Lord, that little children, by reason of their innocence, are under the protection and in close communion with the angelic host. For He says: "Their angels do always behold the *face* of my Father which is in heaven;"—another way of expressing the idea of their peculiar nearness to God.§ And then Paul, who had personal experiences in the heavenly realms, declares concerning the angels that they are "all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."‖

If I have been over-careful to press home the full force of the Scripture testimony on this important theme, it is because in this skeptical age, when it is considered clever even among Christians to doubt

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* Ps. xxxiv. 7. † Ps. xci. 11. ‡ Luke xv. 7.
§ Matt. xviii. 10. ‖ Heb. i. 14.

the supernatural, we do not realize as we ought the doctrine of the nearness of heaven and of the affectionate relation of the angels to us. Men are too apt to regard heaven as a far-off region—angels as beings originally created such, and of a different mould from men. But the angels are always around us, endeavoring to get access to our hearts. Therefore heaven is around us, resting on the earth as its foundation. Angels are seeking to guard us in all our ways,—their power to guard being in proportion as our thoughts are pure, our ends good, and our affections heavenly. They do not save us from all evil? No; we are free men. We can turn to evil as well as good. We can draw the devils around and near us if we will. The angels encamp, so runs the law, round about those who fear the Lord. When we look to Him, the angels close in around us; when we look to self, they retreat from contact with the infernal hosts which we then invite to our sides. When we try to do and be good, they help us; when we do evil and seek only to gratify our selfish loves, they have no power to help, because we have brought ourselves into communion with the spirits of evil.

This is another doctrine of Scripture: We stand unconsciously between two worlds. The spirits of each have access to our souls. It is ours, in the exercise of the freedom with which God has endowed us, to choose our invisible associates; to secure the protection of angels, or to invite the malign influence of their opposites. Equally recognized by Scripture is the doctrine of the interference of evil spirits with the affairs of men; not so much, however, didacti-

cally taught as unquestionably assumed. Not to dwell upon it, but to cite only a few allusions to the fact:—

Remember that Saul did his wicked acts under the influence of an evil spirit whom David could cause to depart from him by the music of his harp; that it was Satan who entered into the heart of Judas when he betrayed the Saviour; that our Lord cured many of the evil spirits who had entered into them, as well as cast out the devils, which in that day could possess even the bodies of men as well as their souls; that He calls evil men the children of the devil; that James admonishes Christians to resist the devil, assuring us that if we do, he will flee from us; that all the apostles recognized the influence of devils upon the heart. In fact, the doctrine of the influence of evil spirits is as clearly recognized as that of the ministry of angels, though not perhaps so often referred to.

Is it a matter of no importance, then, that we should fully realize the position in which we stand? Is it of no consequence that we should be made aware of our relation to the invisible realm which surrounds us and interpenetrates our moral being? Shall we gain no strength by understanding the laws of our daily life, the snares into which we fall, the subtle insinuations by which we are seduced, and our momentary need, therefore, of an almighty and ever-present Saviour? Pitfalls are dug for us at every turn; snares are laid in every path; nets are spread whithersoever we go. They come from evil but invisible spirits; from this world's wicked men

who, departing this life and becoming devils, seek to drag us down to their own level. Influences are brought to bear on us of whose subtlety and power we are not aware; insinuations are introduced into our minds of the sources of which we are in total ignorance; seductions are spread temptingly before the mind, and like Jesus in the wilderness we are offered all the kingdoms of the world, that is, its pleasures, its riches, its joys, its places, its power and preferment, if we will only fall down and worship what is evil. No matter how much you overreach your neighbor; no matter how ill-gotten your wealth, get money! No matter to what depths of meanness you may stoop, get power and place! No matter how far you dull your moral sense, or debauch your soul, get pleasure! Everywhere, and at every turn, these evil spirits sing to the heart that siren song which was sung in the wilderness, "All these things shall you have, if you will but fall down and worship us; for, only worship evil and you worship us." And the poor deluded soul goes down on his knees to the invisible devil; he does his behests; and he has his reward. Then from his presence fly the pure messengers of God, the spirits of just men made perfect, who cannot come near because he is surrounded by atmospheres which they cannot breathe.

It is when the temptation is resisted that the angels come, as they came to Jesus, and minister to the oppressed and wounded heart. It is on the man's earnest appeal to the Lord that the spirits of evil desert their posts and fly. James spake truly when he said, "Resist the devil and he will

flee from you." You can only resist him effectually by looking to the Lord for strength, and resisting the evil thought. You can only resist him—when the wicked desire springs up within the heart, and the ignoble deed is on the point of being done, and the kingdom of this world is about to be reached for and grasped—by straightening up the soul, and (in humble acknowledgment of the Lord as the sole and almighty Deliverer) letting the heart exclaim, whether the mouth does so or not, "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

Or if the thought has given way to the tempter's wiles, or the heart succumbed to the mean desire, or if the act is done at the instigation of the evil one, it is when sorrow comes, and the soul is smitten with remorse, and conscience is aroused, that there is joy among the angels of heaven over the repentant sinner. Then they gather again; they come with their soft entrancing ways; they wipe the weeping eyes and dry the mourner's tears. Then they soften and subdue the heart; they ennoble the desire and purify the thought; they lift the aspirations to the Lord, and the whole inner man becomes filled with earnest though silent prayer for aid; then, panoplied with the Lord's power, they bear us up, as it were, in the arms of their strength, and pour into us that spirit, courage and resolution which, coming from Him who hath "all power," can fight this battle with the evil one on the inner field of the heart.

And the connection of earth with heaven cannot be fitful and spasmodic; at least, no more so than

the vacillating heart of man may make it. The influences of heaven must press for acceptance at all times; dependent, not on the will of the angels veering or changing, but entirely on the will of man. When the heart is serene and peaceful; when the lusts and passions are lulled to rest; when the true affections burn with steady flame, and the thoughts rest in contemplation of the good and true, of heaven and of God; when there is a holy desire to do right in all the relations of life, and to live in strict conformity with the Lord's law; at such times we may know that we are resting in angelic arms, and that our inspirations are drawn from holy sources. You have felt, perhaps, that rest and peace. All have their angel-encompassed hours. Or you have felt the demon of passion rend your soul, and the lust of depravity rise in its strength and sweep you along in its fiery torrent like a feather in the wind; and you were forced along in utter detestation of yourself, and with no seeming strength to resist. That was not yourself; it was the demoniac influence of the invisible world. You opened a little loop-hole of ungodly thought or purpose, and the whole force of hell poured in at its invitation, and swept you away in its overmastering current. Then, in devout acknowledgment of the ever-present and almighty Saviour, swing yourself, thought and heart, to the heavenly side; and (without disparaging or neglecting oral prayer) your every desire and purpose and effort becomes a prayer to the Lord for needed strength. Your heart is straightway opened to the Divine protecting sphere. And in your deep distress, cannot the Heavenly Father

send you, should you need them, "more than twelve legions of angels"?

It is a beautiful doctrine; and true as it is beautiful. And one of its greatest charms is in the thought and hope, yea, the certainty, that as the angels were once earth-born like ourselves, those who have loved us best and gone before—parents, children, friends—these most likely would be the very ones who would lead us lovingly, cherish us dearly, and cling to us fondly amid the troubles and trials of our earthly life.

The songs of our Sunday-schools are justified, though the worldliness of more mature age may smother their delightful suggestions; and the angels beckon us on every hand. They chant by our cradles their sweet inspiring songs; they press to our sides in all the vicissitudes of life; they seek us still when we reject them; come at our call no matter how often sent away; lead us always, if we will permit them, to heaven and the Lord; illumine for us the pages of the written Word; protect and aid us in many an emergency when our mental state has placed us within the range of their protection; receive our last expiring breath; and introduce us, if we will allow them and our state of affection will permit, among the shining ones in the world beyond.

The truths touching the connection of earth with heaven are beautiful, indeed, and fraught with power to impart a holy joy. It is ours to receive or reject them as we may choose; to use them or abuse them. Let us act wisely and endeavor to profit by a gift so precious.

I have in previous lectures traced the angel from

his formation on earth to his home in heaven; and back again as God's messenger to man. I return to the first thought. Hearts make heavens. Earth is the nursery whence they spring. This is a charming world; it is filled with the Lord's good gifts, with not a taint of evil naturally clinging to any one of them. Its grass is green; its flowers are fair; its fruits are luscious; its sun-lit trees are canopies of joyous life. It was built to be the nursery of heaven; it was made to mould young hearts into angels of light. How have we changed all this, and made it the nursery of hosts of fiends!

Yet the influence of heavenly hopes and hearts surrounds it still. The Lord is increasing these continually day by day. He is ever adding thousands of angels to his fold. The world is still beautiful, and man may restore the ruin he has wrought. It is not abandoned pleasure, mad ambition, greed of gold, or silly vanity, that shall restore its pristine innocence. No: it is contentment, purity of heart, righteousness of life. It is love of the neighbor, love of right, love of use, that finds its chief joy in serving rather than in being served; a love that emulates the Saviour's own self-sacrificing life when on earth. Laboring and striving for these, we do our part to restore this earth to its sublime destiny of rearing souls for heaven. Gaining these, earth's homes will be lit with love once more, its beauties be but the reflection of each heart's best joy; and so near to heaven is it, that this mortal body is but the veil which, drawn aside at death, leaves us in open and blissful fellowship with the angels.

VI.

CHILDREN IN HEAVEN.

THE Scripture furnishes but little direct testimony concerning the lot of those who are removed from this world in childhood, and their condition in the other life. The question is whether, in the light of the general truths concerning the other world which are there taught, in the true spirit of all its supernatural teachings, in the unquestionable meaning, intent and drift of its positive utterances, we do not find enough to justify us in laying down some very certain principles, full of hope and comfort, concerning those of our little ones who have passed on to the other side.

Should you ask me why the Scriptures are so silent on a subject of such deep interest, while they are replete with the terms and conditions of the salvation of adults, and with warnings lest by their conduct they bring themselves under condemnation and lose heaven, I should answer, that the fate of our children is taken for granted. The Bible raises no question on this point, because there is no question. If it warns *you* to flee from the wrath to come, it is because *you* are in danger. If it warns not the children, it is because they are not in danger. If it lays before you the blessing and the curse, the blessing if you keep the commandments of the Lord, and the curse if you keep them not, it is because

you have the mental development, the experience and the rationality which enable you to comprehend the difference between right and wrong. You are responsible because you are rational beings. You are responsible precisely in the degree that you are rational. The common sense of mankind makes this distinction. It is recognized in our laws, in our customs, in the government of our families.

The law does not punish idiots or insane persons for their crimes, because they are not morally responsible. Their minds are not swayed by reason; and crime to be crime must be committed by one who is morally capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. The law would not punish a babe for surreptitiously carrying off a piece of money, even if it took it from your pocket, because the very gist of crime is wanting, the knowledge that it is a wrong—that it is contrary to law—that it is sin. Custom overlooks in children the violation of those courtesies in manner and conversation, which would be considered intolerable in adults. In our families we pardon many things in a little child which would be unendurable in one of maturer age; acts and words which we consider pleasant and cunning in a child of six, become impertinent or vulgar or criminal in one of sixteen. The responsibility of man, both mental and moral, is measured by his reason. True, the law, from the impossibility of knowing the heart of man, cannot always make nice discriminations; but the Divine Father who knows all hearts, makes discriminations with the strictest accuracy.

This was our Lord's meaning when He declared that the servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not, should be beaten with many stripes ; but he that knew it not, yet did commit things worthy of stripes, should be beaten with few. The punishments that inhere in moral wrong, are in proportion to its intelligent and wilful commission. If you know what you are doing, and are rationally aware of its evil nature, you are sinning, and incurring condemnation.

Some unpleasant consequences, however, follow all errors and omissions, even though not deliberate or wilful ; but these are comparatively trivial. From an eternal point of view, the wilful commission of acts which our reason proclaims to be wrong, fixes the evil habit and character of the soul, confirms it in the love of sinning ; and this condemns, because if persisted in it becomes finally ineradicable. But the commission of acts which we do not know to be sins, although in themselves wrong, do not confirm the soul in the love of sinning ; and a habit of that kind is easily conquered when the reason sees it to be sinful, and the heart is desirous to sin no more. And this is just what our Lord meant when He said to the Jews : "If ye were blind (morally, of course), ye would have no sin ; but now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth."

We apply this law directly to the case of children. We find how Revelation teaches us that those who obey the Divine law, are in a state of happiness hereafter, because the very elements of happiness are within their breasts. We find that those who

disobey have, in the conscious and wilful inversion of what is truly human, lost the elements of happiness. The one has admitted the Divine life within, and has become good and God-like in quality. The other has rejected or perverted that life, and become bad, selfish and ungodly. One class is termed the saved; the other class the lost. To which class do our departed children belong? To which are they consigned by the true spirit of Scripture? To be lost, it is necessary to sin knowingly and wilfully, to love evil for its own sake, to have confirmed the soul in a sinful habit. And since the child has not done this, how can it be lost? It is impossible, so long as the Word and the character of God remain what they are.

At what age, however, would this irresponsibility cease and responsibility commence? It were difficult to say. That will differ with different persons. Some minds mature earlier than others. Some are more responsible at sixteen than others at twenty-six. The law fixes the age of legal responsibility at eighteen for females, and twenty-one for males. The law considers that at those ages the respective sexes have arrived at years of sufficient rationality to assume the control of themselves. In cases of crime, large discretion is vested in the courts to determine whether the individual is a child or an adult, with reference to moral responsibility. In the question of salvation, however, the Lord is the only king and court. He alone can decide.

Now we believe that common sense is always on the side of the higher truth. The Lord is love,

mercy, benignity and justice. These attributes are his in an infinite degree. If it would be a crime in an earthly father to chastise his child for that which, done by him in playfulness and innocence, would be sin in an adult, so is it impossible that the heavenly Father could commit so flagrant a violation of justice and of love. If the state, in its promulgation of law, is wise and merciful with its children in regard to this matter, how much more wise and merciful is infinite Wisdom ?

That our children are punished in another life because they have not come to years of rationality in this, is incredible ; that they are lost when evil has not become the habit of the soul, no right-thinking person can believe. The question settles itself.

Two of the tenderest scenes in the life of our Saviour are in connection with little children. One was, when the disciples had a dispute as to who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. They referred the matter to Jesus for decision. According to his frequent custom, He gave them no direct answer ; but He called a little child to Him, and set him in the midst of them. Then said He, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* The characteristics of children, with all their faults, are innocence and humility. And these are the chief characteristics of heaven. They

* Matt. xviii. 3, 4.

who possess these virtues, *all* who possess them, are saved—be they children or adults. Possessing these, you cannot have faults of character so condemnatory as to lose your hold on heaven. Therefore all children are saved because all have these. Such is the lesson.

The second scene was, when loving parents brought these cherished objects of their hearts to Jesus that He might touch them. Unquestionably they believed that great virtue would pass to these little ones, if He would but lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples were indignant. They deemed it beneath the dignity of the great Master to do what these parents desired. Another lesson was in store for the disciples concerning the true nature of spiritual things. "Suffer the little children," said Jesus, "to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."* Again He teaches that innocence and humility constitute heaven. Again the only conclusion from his words must be, that little children by reason of this, whatever their unconfirmed errors might be, were always heirs of heaven. "Of *such* is the kingdom of heaven!" Again, though in another form of words, He utters that truth of touching import, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child,"—that is with child-like innocence and humility—"he shall not enter therein."

But He did more than this. He took them up in his arms and blessed them. There was a deep

* Matt. xix. 14.

spiritual significance in this. Whom the gracious Saviour takes in his arms and presses to his bosom, those are the ones He most tenderly loves. I say *most* tenderly, to indicate their peculiar nearness to Him. The more humble and innocent we are, the nearer we are to his bosom and the closer the union between Him and us. But He *blessed* them. And what is *blessing?* It is a term indicating the highest happiness and purest joy that can be conferred. The Divine blessing to man is the largest measure of *spiritual* happiness and joy that man can receive. And the act of the Lord's blessing the little children was a declaration that they in their humility and innocence, of all the vast multitude to be found in heaven, were the largest inheritors of the blessings born of Him.

But on the first occasion, after wandering from the subject, He returned to it in a peculiar and striking manner. "Take heed," said He, "that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." The allusion is evidently here to the doctrine of guardian angels, so clearly taught in other parts of Scripture. We all—those of us, at least, who are becoming regenerate—have ministering spirits, angels of the Lord, encamped about us to keep us in all our ways. But the angels of the little ones—so runs the text—"do always behold the face" of their Father which is in heaven.* Those who see God,

* Matt. xviii. 10.

who are said in Scripture language to *behold his face*, are the purest in heart. This is an expression indicating rare purity and an exceptionally close union with the Lord. The text teaches that the guardian spirits of children are the highest and best of the angels. They are in the sweetest angelic companionships, because they are the purest of earthly beings. Is there, then, a possibility of their condemnation? How could such a thought be entertained by a righteous God? Then there is the parable of the lost sheep and its summary conclusion: "Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish!" *

And if while on earth they are under the guardianship of the purest in the celestial realms, death severs not the connection. If, as the child-soul drops its form of clay, it passes into the other sphere clasped in the angels' loving arms, we may be sure it is not abandoned by them on the other side. As the angels are its ministering spirits here, so must they be hereafter; and we behold our little ones, as they pass the portals of death, press on into the deeper love and tenderer care of angels, who will there educate them in a manner far surpassing that of the best and wisest of earthly mothers. Why not? Is there any other reasonable conclusion? We pass from what our Lord teaches to what inevitably follows from his teachings; from what we know, to what we cannot help believing as its

* Matt. xviii. 14.

legitimate results; and we leave our children severed from us by death, with the Lord's blessing resting upon their heads, and in the care of the wisest and most loving of all the angels in the heavenly realms.

We may follow in imagination these little ones, now taken under the open protection of their hitherto invisible guardians. We may see them at their childish sports; we may hear their rippling laughter; we may behold their eyes beaming with joy and full of frolicsome mirth,—each angel-mother also laughing and sporting with them in like playful mood. She is as innocent as they, with the wisdom of maturity added to the simplicity of childhood. The ebullitions of hereditary evil, the bad temper, the tendencies to lie or steal or covet, are checked in their very beginnings, nipped in the bud; and so they have no chance to grow. What an advantage have these heavenly parents over those of earth! These angel-mothers read thoughts and hearts. All in the higher realms do that. Spirit is made up of will and understanding, of love and thought; and when we see soul or spirit, we see those embodied in spiritual forms. How much more easily, then, in the other sphere, to get at the disposition of the child! How much less difficult to check each dawning act of waywardness, each budding manifestation of self-will, when the peculiar character of the little one is beforehand known! How much easier to instruct, when the mental capacity and moral foundation are intuitively discerned.

Then remember that these teachers are assigned

by no rule of outward circumstance, or on the earthly necessity of doing the best we can; but from the wide realms of the Lord's entire heaven the fittest, wisest, best are selected for the work by unerring Divine Wisdom. Their education goes on; their minds develop; they grow into heaven, for heaven grows into them; they are surrounded by its influences; they become living representatives of its highest virtues. They, in their turn, become angels of such purity, that they always behold the face of their Father which is in heaven.

It seems hard to lose our children. If we love them with a merely natural or animal passion, it *is* hard. If we cherish them with a merely selfish love, and desire them only to foster our pride and vanity by the praises they receive and the admiration they win and the triumphs they achieve, it *is* hard. But in the degree that our affection is unselfish and true; in the degree that it regards their spiritual good rather than our natural comfort or pride; in the degree that it partakes of that Divine quality which is willing to lay down even life for their sakes; in that degree we are resigned and trustful, and the hardship of their removal loses its poignancy. It requires considerable progress in the regenerate life to resign our children unmurmuringly into the Lord's hands, and yet maintain unbroken the whole force of our parental affection. Yet a firm conviction and a clear view of their lot in the other life, with its many and great advantages over the lot of most children here, should dispel our doubts, comfort our hearts and dry our tears.

Do children develop in the world beyond? Do they grow to be men and women there? Is there any living organic form that does not grow till it reaches its maturity? Was there ever a sound mind created that did not mature? Are our children like unripe fruit that forever remains unripe? —like those feeble minds, which, by reason of some defect in the material organism, never in this life develop into rational beings? These children left their material bodies here; their spirits continue still to live. Of course they develop and grow in the spirit world; and this, because it is a universal law of mind; and it is mind that goes into the other world. Human nature is human nature still, and ever remains so. It no more changes because its field of activity is removed to the other world, than you would change if you changed your residence to England or Japan. The universal law of life, mental, moral and physical, is activity or decay—growth or dissolution.

Our children, therefore, are not stunted in stature or dwarfed in intellect on the other shore, where they have more and better advantages than they would have had here. Peculiar educational privileges do not belittle the intellect, nor do celestial surroundings prevent the growth of the virtues. The simple statement of this proposition reveals its truth. And who believes that the nearer presence of God, and the closer communion of angels, tend to produce mental conditions approximating those of idiots or fools? We base our conclusions on the known nature of the human mind and the consistent

teachings of the Word of God ; and can any foundation be more secure ?

Remember, too, that the Lord likens the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard-seed which, though the least of all seeds, becomes a great tree which spreads its branches toward heaven. An essential element of heaven is growth.

We need not hesitate, then, to believe in the glorious future for all who are taken from this world in infancy and childhood. There is a providence in their removal, however deep and inscrutable it may be to our narrow vision. We mourn for our departed child ; and I would not forbid one tear of affection which tends to soothe the aching breast, or one sigh which marks a struggle for the resignation of the heart. Tears and sighs, like other things, are good or bad according to the nature of the founts from whence they flow. But how often parents part with a child to give it better educational advantages or to secure it a purer home on earth ; with a tear perhaps, sometimes with a sigh. Now if you can gain for that child the benefits of angelic education ; if you can win for it the closer intimacy of heaven ; if you can have the certainty of its entering the society of the purest and noblest and best, and of becoming itself so pure and noble as to remain in such society forever, would there be no support or solace in the thought ? Then how do you know what your child would have been had it remained on earth ? Can you read the futurity of hearts ? May not the tender mercy of the Lord have snatched it from a fate a thousand-fold worse than death, and appointed

it a destiny a thousand-fold better than the most brilliant career on earth? Let us not question the wisdom of God's providence in the removal of our little ones from this lower sphere.

Then there is another aspect of the case. Why, we are often asked, does the Lord take some and leave others? Why, if such be their glorious destiny, must I plod on in this weary path below, when I might have been, even as these have been and are, so much better off in the world beyond? Is Divinity partial? By no means. But it is much easier to question the Lord's wisdom than to improve his ways. Reflect that earth is the nursery of heaven. Souls must be born into this life before they can reach that. If people were all taken away in infancy, the increase of heaven would cease. It is in the order of the Lord's providence that heaven should increase forever. He would set no limit to the multitude that shall inherit its joys. To all eternity shall the vast caravan, with its ever-multiplying numbers of newborn souls, keep marching from the world below to its holy Mecca in the world above. And somebody must stay here and endure the world's temptations for a while, and walk its rugged paths, that it may remain the nursery of heaven. If there had never been an earth, there would never have been a heaven; if no inhabitants on earth, God would have dwelt in solitude without an angel to be blessed by his love; and if all were removed from earth in infancy, heaven would cease to grow. Why this or that little one is taken and you and I are left, we must leave to the wisdom of Him who orders all

things well. Let us be thankful that so much larger proportion of the born on earth are saved, because of the removal of so many in infancy and childhood, and rejoice that we shall be permitted to rejoin them there, if we do our work here faithfully and well.

Then, if we judge from the known laws of the mind; if we note the fact that the noblest characters have their foundations laid in childhood, we are led to the conclusion that the best of the angels come from those who, being under constant angelic care, have had the best foundations laid. Therefore the infants soonest dead to earth, would mature into the most loving angels of the better land. And perhaps the earlier removed, the more exalted the state to which they will finally attain. Then *they* become in turn the peculiar ministers of the Lord to men. Under Him, and in his strength, they become each in his degree, the saviors of the world. They are needed above; are needed there for our sakes. Bad as the world now is, what would it be without their ministrations? By them the hearts of men are held to what little spiritual anchorage they have, and in connection with them is done what good is here effected.

Far be it from me to weaken faith in the Lord's immediate influence on man, by upholding the doctrine of the ministry of his supernal host. They go together; they are equally doctrines of truth Divine. But the mediate uses under the Lord's providence, that are performed by man upon his fellow-man, show how infinitely more useful can be the angels of his mercy to us who remain on earth. And we

have in this another reason why so many infants are taken from this world. They are the ones who can receive from the Lord his most exalted blessings, his most interior wisdom and love, and pass them on to us. They have a use in the order of Providence to other angels and to men. They are needed above. They must go there, else the wisest plans of the Lord would fail. What are our aching hearts to the vast and beneficent designs of the most High? What are the momentary pangs we endure, to the setting and keeping in order of the grand temple of humanity on earth and in heaven? Cease, O man, to measure your tears and sighs against the eternal well-being of the universe! Calm your troubled breast, for the salvation of the world is in wiser and more beneficent hands than yours.

When you send your child to a distant school, you can bear it, you say, because you have a reasonable hope of meeting him again. What is time to eternity? What is your brief sojourn on earth to your everlasting life in the other world? And as love is born of the spirit, and its heritage is immortal, why should you not, as a living, breathing, human being, meet again face to face your best beloved, when this clay tenement no longer hinders? If those who love each other best cannot meet on the other shore, who can?

But will your little one grow away from you and forget you? Swedenborg somewhere makes a delicate analysis of the likenesses of human minds. He shows how, with all their endless variety, there is a common resemblance in features and character in each nation. Often the resemblance extends to

provinces and their subdivisions. Still more marked is this in races and families—a fact which tends to bind them closely together. There is a hereditary thread of love and thought and disposition which binds the members of a race or family in a bond that cannot easily be broken. The Jewish race is a notable instance of this. In the single family the tie becomes much closer than in the race. It is the link of similarity; it is a hereditary trait that breaks down all apparent differences; an inward likeness which forms a bond that, scattered as its members may be, in difficulty or trouble, draws and holds them together in a sympathy that baffles explanation. There may be exceptions; but the rule is almost universal.

Now similarity is the common bond of souls. Similarity brings people together in heaven. Passing through different experiences on earth, you may acquire different tastes; but let each soul be regenerated after a heavenly pattern, let each be cleansed of its earthly dross, and it will quickly be seen how the hereditary disposition or genius of race, lineage and family will bring together in a world of souls those who have common soul-ties.

Rest assured, then, that if you have become so regenerated as to be ranked with the heirs of heaven; if your minds and hearts are spiritually knit together, your loved ones gone before will crowd around you by the very tie that gave them birth, by their very inheritance of your life, by that very love of yours which ushered in their existence. Forget you! Why, as born of your life and soul, bound to

you by the ties of affection as well as of birth, they have been with you ever since they left this world. They have never deserted you unless in spirit you have deserted them.

But not without regeneration can you hope to dwell with your departed offspring in the great Hereafter. You must be born again—born of the Spirit. If you go the wrong way, they will not follow. Then, certainly, separation must ensue. But they will lead you into heaven if you will permit them. They will wait for you and watch with you and minister unto you if you will let them. They go but one way; if you sever the cord by going the opposite way, then, of course, you are separated from them.

Let us believe, rejoicingly, in the wisdom and ways of the Lord! Let us stand by his Word, and hold to his philosophy, and walk in his ways, and rest in his assurances; then there will be joy in the present, hope for the future, and peace for the soul forever. There is no security elsewhere. Reason without revelation is insufficient; science without the Word of God has no balm for the soul; philosophy without Scripture stops far this side of heaven. But live under the knowledge of the Lord and his gracious revealings, and all is harmony, peace and hope; die, and the spirit's fondest yearnings will be all realized in the mansions above.

HELL.

111

HELL.

I.

THE ORIGIN OF HELL.

THE matter of primary interest, and that to which we shall first direct our attention, is, THE ORIGIN OF HELL. To fully understand the origin of a thing, goes far toward solving the mystery of its nature, and its final outcome and cure.

First, let us glance at what is *not* the origin of hell and then at what *is*.

The popular opinion and that which has been backed up by a great number of theologians, is so puerile, and has so feeble a foundation to rest upon, that it is difficult to deal with it seriously. It is: That there was a race of beings formed previous to man's creation, higher than man, who were called angels, and who on account of their purity and holiness dwelt near to God in heaven; that a certain portion of them, incited thereto by one of the most prominent and powerful named Lucifer, sometimes also called Satan, and under his leadership, rebelled against God; that, in the conflict which ensued they were cast down from heaven, and became fallen angels or devils; and that since then, he and they

have been the tormentors, persecutors and tempters of mankind, seeking to lead us all into the same miserable hell that was originally created for their reception and abode.

John Milton, from the ground-work of mere tradition, built up his wonderful poem of "Paradise Lost," and worked out a thousand imaginary details from this little thread of superstition; and lo, it became the orthodox faith of millions!

But ask for its Scripture foundation, and all we can find is three or four shreds that fall to pieces on being looked at. Thus in Isaiah, we are pointed to the text, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"* But read that 14th chapter, and it is very plain that there is not a word there about Satan or his fall, but that it is Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and *his* fall that is set forth. Nebuchadnezzar is apostrophized as Lucifer. Lucifer is the Hebrew name of the morning star; and the king's fall from his pride and throne to the condition of an idiot and a beast, is likened to the setting of the morning star.

Then we are pointed to the 8th Psalm, where it is written in our English version: "For thou hast made man a little lower than the angels,"† seeming to convey the idea of a race of beings created superior to man. Yet when the original Hebrew is examined and it is found that the term here rendered *angels* is ELOHIM, the Hebrew word for GOD, we see that here is a mistranslation, and that the text is simply,

* xiv. 12. † Ps. viii. 5.

"Thou hast made man a little lower than God;" so that this text furnishes no foundation for the popular doctrine about fallen angels.

But Jude in his epistle says: "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." But then Jude's is the least quoted, least read, least important, and least authentic of all the Epistles. He quotes one or two Talmudic traditions which receive no countenance whatever from any portion of the Bible as literal facts, to illustrate the point in reference to the condemnation which he seeks to make. This particular quotation is certainly too obscure to build a doctrine upon, if we accept it as intended to be given as a literal fact. Besides, this is known to be a verbal quotation from a pretended scripture called the "Book of Enoch," which has been pronounced spurious by the best Biblical scholars; and Jude uses it not as a fact, but as I would use a mythic tale to point a moral or illustrate a position.

The text from Genesis that "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took wives of them," is the last. But it is so much more easy and rational to take the expression "sons of God" in the same sense that it is used in all other places in Scripture, as those who are in faith, and thence in love and obedience to Him, than to believe that disembodied angels openly and visibly lived in marital relations with the inhabitants of the earth,

that it is difficult to imagine how any one could ever have thought of this latter interpretation.

So the doctrine of original or fallen angels, and the origin of hell thence, has only this to rest upon—no more. We therefore dismiss it from further consideration; and assert, that so far as Scripture authority is concerned, it has none. We are then prepared for the only conclusion left, that whatever there is of hell is from the human race; that whatever devils there are, are the souls of the wicked who have once lived in this world.

I say the souls of the wicked. For is not the soul or spirit the real man? Is not the material body simply the machine which the spirit uses for the purposes of this world's life? Do we not know, each one by his individual experience—it requires no philosophy to tell us this—that it is the soul which thinks, understands, loves, wills, reasons, intends? Is it not the will-faculty of the soul which sets in motion the activities of the body? Can the body move in any direction or perform any action, except as the will determines? Is not the body a simple machine, so made that the soul may inhabit it, operate upon it, move it hither and thither, cause it to do this or that according to its own volition? Is it not the soul that sees through the eyes, hears through the ears, feels through the fingers and tastes through the tongue?

Yes; the soul is the man and the body is the semblance of the man. The body is no more responsible for the murderous blow, the burglarious robbery, or the monstrous lie, than is the ship for

the direction in which it is steered by the helmsman or driven by the wind. It is no more responsible for its acts than is the submarine armor which is sent to the bottom of the sea, for the movements to which it is directed by the human being it encases, or than the automaton chess-player for the action given to the springs of its arm by the man concealed within.

The soul is not only the real man, but it is an intricate organism. Let us cease to think of it as an unorganized phantom, a puff of breath, a vapor of the imagination. Organic power cannot be exercised by inorganic life. If one strikes a blow under the propulsion given to the hand by the force of the will, which will fell an athlete to the ground, it is absurd to say that that will-power was an unorganized breath. You might as well call the lightning that rends the sturdy oak a freak of nature, without quality, elements or laws. The soul is a tremendous fact and force ; and because scientists have thus far failed to find it, to dissect it surgically or resolve it chemically, this does not alter or lessen truth. Your experience and mine, the very fact that we possess numberless faculties, that we are swayed to and fro by their impulses, that we love, know, will, think, and by them act—these are worth, as proofs of the organic spirit within and of its reality as the truly living man, more than all the failures of all the scientists who ever lived.

The soul or spirit is the real man. It is organized thought and understanding, love and affection, will and purpose. The character of that thought, under-

standing, love, affection, will and purpose, is the character of the man. The understanding may be orderly or perverted, the thought may be directed to mercy or revenge; the love may be pure or impure; the affection may be directed to worthy or unworthy objects; the will may be for good or for evil; the purpose may be to do justly or unjustly; according as they are one or the other and according to the degree or quantity or manner in which they veer to the one side or the other, such is the moral character of the man.

It is not a question of what the body does; it is a question of what the soul causes the body to do. A killing, unintended as such by the soul within, is no murder. Even the law knows that. But a killing done from intended malice, is a crime. An appropriation of another's goods with the belief of the soul that they were one's own, is no theft; but the same act with the desire and intention to appropriate to one's self what belongs to another, is felony. Therefore it is not the act in and of itself which makes the character; it is the inherent evil of the soul which goes forth into evil deeds.

Each soul has its own quality or character. That character is as much a part of it, and distinguishes as clearly one man from another, as peculiarities of countenance and form distinguish persons one from another; as peculiarities of conformation and color distinguish apple from acorn, rose from violet. That character is ingrained. It is changed only by long and habitual practice. Vice gives way to virtue, ignorance to education, vulgarity to refinement,

evil to good, only by careful cultivation, assiduous watchfulness, much self-forcing, sincere repentance and earnest prayer. What the soul is, that the character is, at any rate for the time ; and the body may be stripped away, the outward husk may be peeled off, may die, decay, perish—still when the soul stands forth on the spiritual plane in another world as a purely spirit-man, it will stand there as to quality and character just what it was here. Just as it left here, will it emerge there ; with the same thoughts, feelings, tastes, sympathies and habits ; with the same methods of comprehending things, and with affections similarly placed : if good, good ; if bad, bad ; if mixed, mixed. It is the old doctrine, "As the tree falls, so it lies." As it is in this world, so it is in the next. And this, because it is the soul which passes from this world into the next ; and it necessarily takes *itself* just as it is with it. It is the doctrine enunciated in the closing chapter of holy Writ : He that is unjust will be unjust still ; he that is filthy will be filthy still ; he that is holy will be holy still ; and he that is righteous will be righteous still.

It is in vain that we sentimentalize over what we imagine the mercy and love of God ought to be. Facts stare us in the face. What we are, we are. What we are here, we are the next hour after we have gone from here and stand consciously on the spirit plane. If character could be buried with the body, if quality of heart could moulder away with the flesh, it were different. But the character of the soul is the soul itself, and the quality of the

spirit is the spirit; and in the same moral and spiritual direction that the tree fell here, as the axe of the woodman, Death, cleaved it to the earth, in the same direction will it lie beyond the grave. As it believed here, so will it believe there; as it thought, spake, loved here, so will it think, speak and love there. The soul is unchanged; it has simply lost its natural vesture.

Both Heaven and Hell are conditions of the soul. They are names given to two qualities of man's spirit, to two leading characteristics of humanity. Nothing tells the story better than the very derivation of the words—good old Saxon words, with plain and distinctive meanings. Heaven means high, arched or elevated; hell, deep, depressed or low. Heaven is within you, Hell is within you; and the outside heaven or hell is made by the outcome of that which is within. Whoever is elevated in understanding, character and virtue, basking in the sunlight of God, is a heaven within himself; whoever is low, ignoble, mean and selfish, turned away from the holy influences of the Most High, is a hell within himself.

Hell is throughout the world. It is in your gambling dens, your gin palaces, your stock exchanges, your halls of debauchery; it is in your homes, by your firesides and in your stores; in your courts and senate chambers, in so far as evil influences control and govern there; it is where every murder, arson, theft or other crime is committed, and is the inspiring breath of each; wherever revengeful hearts have met, or words of falsehood or hate are spoken,

or drunken footsteps totter; it is in every life of meanness and shame; in all the greeds of selfishness, in all the frailties of depravity, and in every alluring snare of sin. Hellish hearts make hell all over this beautiful green earth. What will they make but hell, wherever they go—to Europe, Asia, or the far-off isles of the Indian Sea? to the sphere beyond the grave—the life that opens to us after death?

The origin of hell is here, nowhere else. "God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions," says Solomon. God made man and man made hell; and this, contrary to the express command of God.

He said to Adam—and we are all the Adams of this allegory—Eat of the tree of life and you shall live; eat of the forbidden fruit and you shall die. Go forth, O man, the noblest creation of the hand of God, in that you are morally free. Eat of the heavenly fruit; live by virtue, wisdom and love; sustain your health and life of soul by every influx of light and life that proceedeth from Above, from Me, and you shall live the most glorious life that created mortal can attain—aye, spiritually live forever. But eat of the fruit of disobedience to the laws of God, nourish your soul with the forbidden fruit of sensuality, selfishness and self-seeking, and in the act your soul shall find its moral death, its spiritual grave. Live in the light of the Lord, and all earth is Eden; the whole world is heaven; and the glory of the heaven beyond the grave which you here form for yourself, will be unspeakable. But

live in the light of self and turn your back on the wisdom of God, and your disobedience drives you forth from Eden, the whole world is turned into a hell of violence, disorder and confusion; and the hell you have burned in lines of moral fire within the soul, will go with you because you go with yourself to the regions of the dead. And in this you have originated the very hell against which I warned you.

But why was man created free, when God's power might have made him powerless to sin? Neither you nor I can fathom the unsearchable wisdom of the Creator. We are to believe, however, that there is no condition of life which is at once immortal, happy beyond measure, and glorious beyond conception, no condition of life which is in the express image and likeness of God's own life, except that of moral and spiritual freedom. The law of obedience cannot exist without the possibility of disobedience. There can be no light, except its absence makes darkness; no sweet, that its absence be not bitter; no good, that its absence be not evil; no virtue, that its absence be not vice; no freedom, that its absence be not slavery.

We know this is so. And we know that honesty under compulsion is not honesty; that chastity under compulsion is not purity; and that no seeming good done under compulsion, is good at all. We know that handcuffs and prison-walls which forcibly forbid crime, do not make upright, noble, pure and godlike hearts. We know these things. And we know furthermore that the man who, with temptation be-

fore and around him, manfully resists the evil and seeks the good, who, with positive freedom of right to choose and choice to do, chooses the wisdom of God and does his law, becomes strong in his virtue beyond temptation, pure in his purposes beyond defilement, noble in his life beyond the conception of him who has never been tried and strengthened. Freely chosen virtue is the only virtue; all other is spurious. A voluntary life of good in the overcoming of evil, is the only good; the other is blind force. A freely chosen heaven is the only heaven; the other would be—outwardly good as it might seem—a mere brute indifference which is not heaven at all. But as the laws of good are God's, and freedom is his best gift, and freedom presupposes the power to disobey and turn aside, it is plain that hell here and hereafter originated with the perversity of man.

No Christian can say this freedom is not ours. The very primal law as expressed in Deuteronomy, "Behold I set before you a blessing and a curse; a blessing if ye obey my commandments, and a curse if ye obey them not,"* presupposes power to obey or disobey. The constant injunction of Christ in phrases similar to this, "If ye would enter into life, keep the commandments,"† implies beyond cavil the freedom to keep or not to keep.

So we conclude that whatever there is of hell originates from the human race; that immortal blessedness can only be given, even by the Lord, through freely chosen godliness; that freedom of

* Deut. xi. 26–28. † Matt. xix. 17.

choice carries with it the power to disobey the Divine injunctions; that the voluntary rejection of the Lord and the life He offers, brings hell on earth; that hell is interwoven in the character; that infernal souls carry with them beyond the grave the hell they have chosen here; and that in the words of Scripture, the wicked are turned into hell simply by being "snared in the work of their own hands."

But there is in all this a moral of deep significance. Whatever there is in the dreary desolation of the soul which has said, "Evil be thou my good," is of the soul's own choosing. If God cannot make angels without their being free, because angelic virtue implies that degree of spiritual strength which has conquered temptation in its voluntarily wielding the sword of the Lord, He has at least given and gives us every moment the strength to overcome. It is ours to live; it is ours to die. It is ours to succumb; it is ours to overcome. All is ours in the Lord's strength.

But, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." We are making hells or heavens every day. We are originating new heavens or new hells for the eternal world, in every act and thought and purpose of our lives. Which shall it be?—the blessing or the curse?

II.

THE NATURE OF HELL.

WE read in the gospel of John: "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John iii. 19.) This is a truth of universal application. It was not more peculiarly suited to the time of Christ than to other ages; nor more appropriately said to the Jews than to other men. Humanity is not condemned because it does not believe in Moses, in the Pope, or even in Christ. It is not condemned because it does not believe in the Trinity, in the Atonement, or in immersion. It is condemned in this: that the light of true life having been in all ages held up before the world; in all ages there have been those who loved spiritual darkness rather than light, because an evil life was more loved by them than a good life,—because sin to their hearts was dearer than salvation.

The belief in erroneous doctrine damns no man. The force of education, strong hereditary tendencies of thought, a limited degree of rationality, birth among a people who have never known the truth, imbecility or ignorance—any or all of these causes may prevent people from acknowledging, in this world, the higher truths. But it is not more cer-

tain that a ship when the dry rot has gained the mastery of its frame, will go down, or that a tree when decay has struck its roots, will die, than that, when evil life has struck to the heart, man's condemnation follows. Ignorance may be enlightened; a weak understanding may be strengthened; error may be acknowledged; sin even, committed in moments of weakness, or in ignorance of its evil, or with a yearning for a mastery over it, may be repented of, atoned for, pardoned. But moral leprosy condemns of itself. It needs no Divine voice to speak the condemnation, for the fact is self-evident. The human heart-ship goes down; we see it sink. The human tree stands blasted; we see its nakedness. The soul is damned, not for its want of belief, but because of the inward rottenness which causes the unbelief; not because it cannot see, but because, loving the evil which the divine light reveals and condemns, it does not wish to see.

I do not like the word our Bible-translators so often use—damnation. Condemnation is the same word, but it sounds better. Damnation has acquired a false theological meaning. When we use it, we think of an arbitrary God casting into torment a lost soul because he denies a certain creed. Its significance has become horrible, terrific. But condemnation seems to come to us with a softer inflection. A thief is condemned or sentenced to jail because of his crime. Really it is his crime that condemns him, not the judge. The judge is only the mouth-piece of the law. So sin condemns a soul, not the Lord, The love of sin has its law. The law is that of

moral degradation. It is inherent in the sin, and is the result of no vengeance on the part of any higher power. A ship is said to be condemned when it is pronounced unseaworthy. But there is no malediction or revenge in the matter. It is its own inherent rottenness that condemns it. The Greek word so often translated *damnation*, is the same as the one which is rendered *condemnation*. The difference is not in Divine inspiration, but in the taste of translators in selecting English words to represent the Greek.

The nature of hell, therefore, involves the nature of damnation or condemnation. When we get at what condemnation is, we have arrived at the nature of Hell.

In the last lecture we reached these definite conclusions justified by reason and Scripture: That immortal blessedness can only be given to a being who is rationally free to choose the good; that a man morally free is the only virtuous man, the only holy man, and the only happy man, in the Divine sense of these terms; that freedom of choice carries with it the power to disobey the Divine injunctions; that the voluntary rejection of the Lord and the life of good which He offers, brings evil and hell on earth; that hell is simply the love of vice interwoven in the character; that therefore wicked souls carry with them beyond the grave the hell they have made and chosen here; that they must do so because they arrive there with the same characters with which they left here; and therefore whatever there is of hell hereafter, originated from the human race.

We say that hell begins here. We know it is so, for the fact is before our eyes. We have only to look within ourselves and see if there is any wrong desire, impure thought, or wicked device; and so much as there is of these, so much of hell is there in the heart. We are under the condemnation just so far as we love and act from what is evil and wrong.

Who condemns us? Is it God? By no means. God is all love and mercy. But in creating man, the noblest of all created beings, He has gathered together and centred in him the highest faculties which can be given to a creature and not make that creature equal with himself. One of these is freedom. Man is no slave. He is no dog that he must fawn by the inherent force of his nature; no tiger that he must rend and tear by the unavoidable instinct within him; no lamb that he must be meek by Divine compulsion. Man is morally free; spiritually a child of liberty. This is the main difference between man and beast. The beast is what he is by nature. Man is what he makes himself. True, he may have a hereditary proclivity this way or that; but he is free to overcome his hereditary proclivity.

Law is law. It is not a thing to toy or sport over, whose decrees may be changed with every human whim. While man is free, he must obey the inherent law of his creation or suffer the consequences. Physically, morally and spiritually it is the same. If he jumps from the third story of a lofty building, the law of gravity will break his bones. If he places himself on the revolving mill-wheel, the laws of me-

chanics will crush him. If he puts his arm in the fire, the law of heat will burn it off. So with the operation of depraved tastes. If through gluttony he tampers with the laws of his physical system, the offended law sends upon him dyspepsia or gout. If he drinks to excess, it sends upon him delirium tremens. Or if he lives a riotous life, it inflicts upon him horrible diseases.

Now God does not send these things upon man. His laws are inherent in creation. He has created things for the best; and if He could have made them better He would. He could not create, and withdraw all law from the objects created. He could not create, and say: "Violate the laws of creation as you please; run riot in your perversions of my best gifts; and the very laws by which they were made and by means of which they exist, shall be suspended in order to demonstrate my love and mercy." No: He could not do that, and for a very simple reason. God is the law; and He works by the means which He himself is, and cannot possibly work against Himself. There is reason in all things; and this seems very reasonable. Obeying and disobeying law must produce opposite results. And if the one is beauty and order and blessedness, the other must be deformity and disorder and condemnation.

Thus, what is philosophically and physically true, is morally and spiritually true. The spirit of man is an organized being or substance. If it acts in harmony with the laws which the Creator impressed upon it, it is healthy and happy. If it does not, it is unhealthy and unhappy. If it studies those sci-

ences and practices those arts which all recognize as healthy and invigorating, the mind is constantly and in an orderly manner strengthened and expanded. If it reads French novels and gloats over the horrible things in the Police Gazette, it will become weakened and debased. If the affections are placed on high and worthy objects, they grow more heavenly every day; if on things sensuous, low and mean, they daily grow more hellish. If we cultivate amiability, purity of thought, sincerity, truthfulness, honesty, courage, we are slowly becoming angels; if we are nursing selfishness, vanity, pride, passion and the like, we are becoming devils. If we are yielding ourselves to the gentle influence of Christ and his angels, and loving more and more the æsthetics of Divine life, we are becoming gradually filled with the Lord's spirit; and that is heaven. If we are loving and choosing what the Lord condemns, and living as demons live, we are drifting away from the Lord, losing life; and that is hell.

In these respects the soul is the seat of it all. Love and affection, mind and thought, intellect and character, will and understanding are the constituent elements of the soul. What these are the soul is. The soul, therefore, may be healthy or diseased according to its intellectual or affectional tone. It is sound or vitiated according to its quality. These things are as we choose and make them. If we live and love a life of order, virtue and Divine law, it is life for the spirit; if of disorder, vice and disobedience, we are under condemnation. But the condemnation is not from the fiat of God, it is in the rotten-

ness of our spirits. As decay of timbers is the condemnation of the ship, as ill health, the result of violation of physical law, is the condemnation of the body, so disease of the mind, rottenness of heart, all violations of the Divine law, are the condemnation of the soul. God has no vengeance to appease, no arbitrary stripes to inflict on the poor, writhing, human worm because he has sinned; but vice and crime are corruptions of the spirit, which of themselves condemn the soul, and leave it incapable of enjoying the blessings or rewards which follow virtue and obedience. And there is no other damnation or condemnation taught in the Bible, or known to natural or spiritual existence, than this.

Here are the sheep; there are the goats. That they must be separated in their final homes, is not an arbitrary appointment of the Lord; it is an inherent necessity. God does not separate them; their characters separate them. Imagine, if you please, you who love peace and order and refinement, cultivated manners and pure conversation—you who love intellectual pleasures and virtuous society—imagine your being called upon to live forever with the savage and filthy Indians of the plains, with the debased Hottentots of Africa, or worse still, with the creatures of vice, debauchery and crime that swarm in some of the hideous alleys of our own city. Why, the very thought is revolting. Death were far preferable to such a life. Annihilation would be a blessing in comparison. So in the other world will the pure, the wise and the good, they who love the Lord and his laws, fly with bated

breath and trembling hearts from the presence of the self-condemned, from those polluted with evil and corrupted with crime, from those who despise God's laws, contemn his ways, laugh at virtue and worship vice. Reverse the picture. Will not these latter equally despise you, scorn your society, spit upon your pretensions as hypocrisy? Why, the devils would suffocate in the atmosphere of heaven, as surely as would the angels in that of hell. The sheep and the goats will separate hereafter by mutual repulsion. No fiat of God will send them to either side. Each will seek his own; and the hells and heavens are formed by the law of mutual repulsion.

With stronger force does this truth press upon us when we remember that in the other world, "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known." The devil may walk the halls of virtue here for purposes of deviltry. But when the mask is stripped off, and hypocrisy can serve him no longer, and his schemes are baffled in their concoction, then he like all others will seek his own. In short, if the wicked were forced into heaven, it would be no heaven to them, but a place of torment from which they would long to be delivered.

We must not be frightened at mere names. The name has been abused, and frightful pictures of God's eternal vengeance and man's everlasting torment, held up under its shadow. But the condition nevertheless exists, however much the pictures may be misdrawn. But does it not begin to dawn upon us, that while that condition or state called hell is a

thing of man's own invention, the region in the other (so called) world, the separate allotment, the government of its subjects, their treatment by the Lord, may all be matters of his immediate love and mercy? If heaven would be hell to that class of spirits, would not Divine Love permit them to separate themselves from its inhabitants? Would not Divine Love rather ameliorate their sufferings than increase them? Would not our Lord act the part of the exemplar He has himself held up, the good Samaritan, and pour oil into their wounds rather than aggravate their torture?

The doctrine of eternal torment is more hellish than hell itself. Divine Love must be very healing in its nature; Divine mercy very far-reaching. It is impossible, inherently impossible, to get away from the presence of the omnipotent One; and his presence carries blessings of some kind wherever it is. Nothing can be more true than the words of David, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there!"* But more particularly concerning this in my next lecture on the Duration of Hell.

From these principles we arrive at some definite conclusions with respect to the nature of Hell. It cannot be a vast cavern in whose darkness lost souls are eternally confined. It cannot be a lake of fire in whose sulphurous flames the damned are eternally burned. It cannot answer to any of the pictures which superstition has so eagerly painted. Deprive

* Ps. cxxxix. 8.

it of everything like Divine vengeance, and you separate it from all the fable and mythology of the mediæval priests. True, there will be left the difference, whatever that is, between a spirit condition and a body condition, between a spirit world and an earthly world. But after that, we have only to look to an earthly hell in order to determine the nature of the one beyond the grave. The fires that burn here will burn there—no other.

Hell is altogether of the heart. Whatever surroundings it has are those which outflow from the heart. Whatever is created about it or takes form within the circle of its influence, is simply the outgrowth, the result, the fashion of the heart within, or of such debilitated intelligence as goes with it. You see a man who is in soul disorderly. The result is, that so far as he is concerned in the creation of the circumstances around him, all will be disorderly. His room will be upside down, his accounts will be in confusion, and he will never be on time. A woman slovenly by nature, will be a slattern in dress, her house will be topsy-turvy, and her cookery a thing that particular people will not crave. The man and woman may be very good in their way, and advancing in the heavenly life; but there is something of hell left in their souls, and it bespatters all their surroundings. Now, in the other world where we live out without let or hindrance the spirit's own character, what kind of surroundings do you imagine the irretrievable slattern would create? Is the Lord going to force her to be neat? If so, why does He

not do so now and here? If not here, what reason have we for thinking He will do so there?

Or take the case of thieves, cut-throats, profligates and gamblers. They have their peculiar tastes, habits and surroundings. They come into them as naturally and revel in them as unctuously as swine in their mire. Their boon companions and their surroundings correspond with their own inward states. It is unnecessary to describe them. To us they are forbidding and disgusting; to them they are attractive and agreeable. To us their habits and conversation are repulsive; to them they are enjoyable. It is their style of heaven; they would be out of place in a better one; and a better one would be unsuitable to them.

But this is only for illustration. It calls attention to the nature of the difference which exists even here between the homes of the virtuous and the homes of the wicked. Each one lives out his own life, and surrounds himself to a certain degree with the things that are to his taste. How can we doubt but that the same law will prevail in the other world? Self-separated, each class will surround themselves with the things which are suitable to their habits and conversation, as well as with the people who are most congenial to them. The whole world about them will be in exact correspondence with their inward and real natures.

But here we are all more or less under the ban of evil. Very wicked men mingle in very virtuous society. Men of very depraved habits are frequently persons of (in some respects) excellent tastes. Very

worthy people are sometimes thrown into mean and squalid quarters, and those of high spiritual attainments are forced by circumstances into close intimacy with others of a worldly cast of mind.

This simply shows that on earth heaven and hell are to some extent, in their outward aspects, mingled. Faces are masks of character; tongues conceal sentiments instead of expressing them; looks belie the heart; actions are hypocritical. Here, because we have these bodily masks, heaven and hell must more or less mingle. Here, because we have not fully made up our minds to go to the bad, we want to appear better than we are. Here, because we want to be thought wise and good, we seek to appear so. Here, each one's own character is mixed, and we do not always ourselves know what we are. Then we must not forget that a strong natural intellect is not incompatible with a debased moral character; and that what is mistakenly called good taste, when solely directed to sensuous things, may easily be mistaken for real refinement which is spiritual, and that it may easily exist with a corrupt heart.

Hereafter, when disguises are stripped off, when spirits live on spirit planes of life; when we know ourselves as we really are; when faces cannot conceal, and tongues cannot lie, and actions are in strict accord with the promptings of the heart; then appearances will yield to realities. Then the law which is partially operative here, will be fully so there; and the outside hell will be just what the thoughts and loves of the devils make it.

But this is no punishment? Well, this is not

where the question of punishment comes in. It certainly is not vengeance. It is plainly not vindictive. But is God vengeful? Is He vindictive? Surely not, except in the outward and deceitful appearance of things. God is mercy; God is love. He holds no slave-driver's lash over the wicked or unfortunate, or the already-much-punished disobedient. Let us once and forever dismiss that from our minds. There is no punishment in the heart of God; though, if you please, you may call by that name the unavoidable consequences of evil and sin.

Where, then, is the terror of hell, if we cannot hold up the fear of torment to restrain mankind from rushing thither? Ah! my friends, fear never yet in the world's history has kept a single heart from hell. Fear may say, "Lord, I believe;" fear may make one writhe as the preacher pictures the doom of the damned; fear may hold one back from the actual commission of the outward sin; but it does not regenerate intellect or heart. Never in this world have eyes wept tears of genuine penitence through fear; never has the breast swelled with love for its neighbor through fear; never has a single heart gone up with rapturous love to the Lord, through fear of his wrath or damnation.

It is your heart that is your heaven; not your shattered nerves. It is your character that sinks you to hell, not the vengeance of the Deity. The light is all around us; the light of a true and high and holy life. We can read it in all creation; we can see it in all the beneficence of the Lord's love; we can admire it in every human impersonation of

its beauty; we can love it in every angelic deed, and every face of angelic sweetness; we can behold it blazing brightly in the Word of God. The light is in the world; but the condemnation is in the heart's loving darkness because of its love of self and sin. And the nature of hell is in the nature of sin and its unavoidable surroundings. You never will be scared into heaven; but cultivate the love of the heavenly life, and you will be drawn thither by the very life which you have learned to love.

III.

THE DURATION OF HELL.

"IF I ascend up into heaven," says the Psalmist, "thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. cxxxix. 8, 9, 10):—David's inspired answer to his own inspired exclamation, addressed to Jehovah: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" It comes to the consciousness with that unequivocal directness which we sometimes find in holy Writ. God is everywhere. Be it in heaven, on earth, the uttermost parts of the sea, or in hell, wherever there is breath of creation, there is God. Not only cannot the creature who has once drawn the breath of life get away from his presence, but it cannot get away from his spirit. So runs the testimony. But God is mercy; how then can it be otherwise than that his mercy is wherever his presence and spirit are—as well in hell as in heaven? And God is love; how then can it be otherwise than that his love is wherever his presence and spirit are—exerted for the benefit of devils as well as of angels? Yes, even in hell, his hand shall lead his creatures; even as devils, his right hand shall hold them.

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy;" "His mercy is everlasting;" "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Of this character are the texts which describe his nature. Love and mercy as Divine characteristics, like all things Divine, are limitless. They are inoperative in no portion of the realms of existence, either on this side the grave or beyond. And it is true as well of the other world as of this, that "He maketh his sun (his love) to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain (his mercy) on the just and on the unjust." And if Christ denounced the doctrine, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy," and asserted that other of angelic beauty, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you," and held up to us in the law of sunshine and rain, that our heavenly Father does this, and therefore we must do it if we would be his children; how then can it be otherwise, than that God loves his enemies in hell, seeks to bless them in spite of their railings against Him, and endeavors to do good to them notwithstanding their hatred of Him? For this is Christianity, and God is the Divine embodiment of the Christian law.

The doctrine of Divine love, unlimited even by the burning hatred of hell against Himself, is the clear Bible truth. The doctrine of Divine wrath is the fallacious appearance of truth. There are two phases of the Bible—two standpoints from which different portions are written—two aspects under which it comes to man. And if men had recognized

this, how many false enunciations of doctrine might have been avoided! The one is the language of glorification descriptive of the higher states of the human soul, where the Lord shines forth clear and cloudless to the mind, in all his justice, benignity, kindness, providence, mercy and love. The other is the language of the soul's prostration, temptation and despair, where the divine splendors of the Lord's nature are hidden in the clouds of the spirit, in its darkness and gloom. Here, the Lord appears to the mind conscious only of its worthlessness, guilt and degradation, as the great avenger and punisher, a Being of vindictive fury and everlasting wrath. Now the one class of passages describes the truth as it comes in its Divine radiance to the unclouded spiritual intellect; the other as it appears to the brutalized and obscured faculties, or the despairing conscience. It is meet that we should have them both placed before us. There are excellent reasons why the Divine Word should reveal the human soul from its highest possibilities to its lowest degradation. There is a philosophy in its running the octaves of all states and conditions possible to man. But there is no propriety in substituting the God who appears before the soul in its states of sensuality and despair, for Him who shines forth in its states of rapture and glory. The Divine Word is written according to a plan. If we do not see the plan, that is our misfortune and not the fault of God. But at least let us cling to the enunciations which ennoble Him to our thoughts and endear Him to our hearts, and hold in abeyance for further light, those which

are the fallacies of deep temptation or the outcries of utter despair.

God is love ; his mercy embraces even hell. No devil can so revile Him, that He will not give that unfortunate the best blessing he is capable of receiving ; no fiend can so hate Him that He will not do his utmost to reach and help him in his fallen state. That only is Christian. That only is God-like.

The subject, then, of the duration of hell—for that is the theme of this discourse, however we may apparently wander from it—is not one that brings God's love into controversy at all. When this question arises, it is usually one of this nature : How long will God's love inflict the stripes and burnings which are the allotted punishment of the wicked ? It is a singular question to ask. There is but one true answer : God's love will not inflict them at all. It inflicts them neither in this world nor in the next. It inflicts them neither for one year nor a myriad of years. Love, whether human or Divine, has no revenges to gratify. True, certain results follow from the violation of certain laws—results that are inherent in the violations. And men are punished, not by the Lord but by their violations of law—that also is true.

That head-ache follows drunkenness, and delirium, continuous debaucheries ; that sickness follows gluttony, and gout, too high wines and too rich food ; that consumption follows careless exposures or unremitting dissipations ; thus that each violation of the law of health, has its inherent punishment—that is true. That profanity blunts one's reverence

for God ; that ribaldry dulls the capacity of religious enjoyment ; that covetousness destroys the principle of neighborly love ; that adultery defiles purity of heart and shuts out heaven ; that the practice of thievery makes knaves, and that of murder, demons ; that each violation of the moral law hastens the degradation and ruin of the soul, makes the understanding averse to higher truth, and the heart callous to the influences of heaven and God ; thus that each violation of the law of the Lord has its own inherent punishment—that also is true. It comes in many forms ; the writhing hatreds of the heart, the gnawings of envy, the unsatisfied desires of ambition and avarice, the ungratified passions of vanity, the eternal torments of jealousy, the lurid burnings of the fires of revenge, the unsatisfactions of selfishness, the depression of spirit after the pursuit of worldly pleasure—the thousand and one torments which are the never-ending results of evil, are punishments as great as any soul need bear.

Say what we will, no wicked man is happy in his crime ; no sinful man enjoys his sin. There is a certain mad pleasure, a certain insane, delirious delight that exists in the excitement of the moment ; but the sting of the law's violation is everywhere and always asserting its presence, and never so strongly as in the moments of inertia and reaction. It is not necessarily in the conscience ; that may be dead. Conscience does not torture in hell ; for it is of the essence of hell that conscience has ceased to exist. It is not in remorse ; remorse may be known no longer. The sting exists in the very violated law.

I have talked with some of the most abandoned villains under peculiar circumstances, and have become convinced that they do not know what happiness means. With them no sorrow for crime exists—no seeming pang of conscience for its commission. It is a condition of utter demoralization and recklessness. The extreme case serves to point the philosophy.

A man may not be a criminal in the eye of the law, and yet he may be a devil. There are degrees of evil, and grades of even complete demoralization. The devil of the heart may or may not be utterly brutalized—may or may not be unlettered or unrefined. But the pseudo gentleman of incarnate selfishness, or the polished scholar of absolutely no principle, is as much a devil in his way as the midnight cut-throat or the highway ruffian. They are violators of the laws under which God created souls to live. They have lost the very capacity for happiness—as much so as the consumptive body or the vitiated blood has, by violations of the physical law, lost the essential conditions of health and comfort. And as the consequences of corporeal disease—the low vitality, the sleepless nights, the painful humors, the nervous tremors, the aches and pains—are the inborn punishments of the transgressions of the laws of the system, so are the consequences of the moral diseases of the soul, the unavoidable and inherent punishments for our infringement of the laws of eternal life.

If you say that experience does not so teach, you are not honest with yourself. Do you not see far

enough above, to know that perfect trust in the Lord, for instance, or in other words, perfect contentment and peace of soul, is the only absolute happiness? On the other hand, do you not know that the love of admiration gives the soul unrest? that envy gives you sleepless nights and unsatisfied waking hours? that desire for revenge gnaws at the heart with remorseless greed? that there is not an evil of soul, nor a sin of commission, which does not bring its bitterness with it? I speak to you as to those who have committed no great crimes, but are prone, or have been, to the less grievous evils of humanity. Every evil or sin, no matter how light, is so much hell within; and each one has its gall—its punishment—its result as an infringement of the moral law.

This is the great principle. Then when we go into the other life, how shall we get rid of our evils?—for they are seated in the soul. Surely we carry our hell with us; and its own punishments are inseparable from its existence.

It has been my constant purpose in previous discourses to press home the truth that hell is essentially evil in the soul; that as souls, not bodies, go into the other life, each one carries his own life with him whatever it is; and that the natural law of repulsion between the evil and the good, would separate the former into a community which, as applied to the other world, is denominated hell.

As therefore God has no revenges to execute, but as He is all love toward his enemies, and mercy toward those who hate and despitefully use Him, it

follows that even there "His hand shall lead them and his right hand hold them;" that is, so far as it is possible, they retaining their inborn freedom of choice. Certainly, then, He will not scourge them. He surely will not burn them. If anything in Scripture seems to indicate that, it is so utterly subversive of Christian ethics, so entirely opposed to other Bible teaching, that those who hold so must interpret the Scripture wrongly. On the contrary He will mollify their misery, and, so far as He can, will quench the rising flame of their evil lusts. This would be an expression of love; the other would not.

The nature of future punishment we learn by our experience here. It is the burning flames of our own wicked desires. These punish us savagely. In this world, however, their punishment often tends to reform.

Let me say here, that there is only one light in which we can view this life as compared with the other. We are placed here to form character. We are born here to determine in our freedom what we will be hereafter. This life is threescore and ten; the other is eternity. We are like young trees in a nursery, only we grow as we will to grow. If we grow straight and true, we are transplanted at last into the garden of the Lord; if crooked and deformed, we are hewn down and cast into the fire—the fire of our own evil lusts.

Now there is a certain point to which a sapling may grow crooked, and yet by judicious training be brought back to a straight and graceful form. But

there is a certain degree of crookedness which it may attain, wherein its gnarls and twists have become so firmly set, so hard and obdurate, that no ropes nor stakes nor pulleys can straighten it out again. It will break, it will split, it will die, but it will not straighten. Its crookedness has become its character, inherent and forever obdurate.

The soul of man is often compared to a tree in the Bible. And as souls we are born upon this plane of life, as into nurseries of eternal character. None of us grow up precisely as we ought. We get crooked here and gnarly there, and twisted in the very parts where we ought to show most spiritual grace. But we are freer than the trees. We are our own husbandmen. We till our own soil; we drive our own stakes; we prune and tie back and straighten out our own characters. The Lord gives us the strength, but we do the straightening. He gives us the life, but we appropriate or apply it. He gives the growth, but we erect or crook ourselves under his sun of love and rain of mercy at pleasure. And up to a certain point we may go wrong, do sinful deeds, without losing the power to retrieve our character. True, each sin is weakening that power; and as we yield to our evils, it becomes harder and harder to spring back to the proper place again. But there is a point at which the heart becomes so gnarled and knotted, so twisted and bent, so old in sin, so hardened in iniquity, so given to worldliness, so much in love with self, that neither the love nor the mercy of God can straighten us out again. We might be burned under its ardor, we might be crushed by its

pressure, we might have our inward natures tortured into a thousand agonies or utterly annihilated, but we cannot straighten. The character is the man; the quality is the soul. And when the evil quality or character freely chosen, has permeated each fibre, artery and vein of the spirit organism, has become indurated and permanent, if you wrench it out you rend the soul into infinitesimal fragments. For when you have taken out all that constitutes the man, there is no man left. You can as easily extract the corrosion from vitriol, or the poison from arsenic, and have vitriol and arsenic left, as take the hell out of a soul that has confirmed itself in its worldliness, selfishness and sin, and have an angel left. All nature asserts this principle. And grieve as we may over the fact, neither Scripture nor reason justifies the belief that the immortal soul is an exception to the otherwise universally established law. This world is the nursery of eternal character, O man, for you. Improve it to your glory, or demoralize yourself at your peril. That is the language addressed to you by all science and all revelation. Here you stand in your moral freedom, the best gift of God. Here make your heaven or your hell for the great Hereafter, whichever you may choose.

I do not mean to say that dying in some of our evils, we may not rid ourselves of them in the other world. I speak of the final choice of the heart. I discriminate between sins sorrowed over but not yet fully conquered, and the sin-indurations of the thoroughly calloused heart. Personally considered, we cannot always tell which is which. It matters

not that we should. The final choice of good or evil, here made in freedom deep down in the heart of hearts, will fully manifest itself only where all disguises are stripped off and souls are open books for all to read.

Then with the irretrievably crooked trees of humanity as they congregate beyond the grave, God's mercy and love will dwell forever, not his wrath and fury. But how? By torturing them with endeavors to straighten out that which may break but cannot bend? By visiting them with a conscience and remorse which would only torment but not reform? By placing them under the eternal lash, or burning them in flames of everlasting fire—agonies of anguish which would mete out endless punishment, but lead to never a moment's regret for that which had become hardened into eternal character?

No: In one sense it is true that the advent of the Lord has saved all mankind; not all indeed upon the plane of heaven and Christian love, but all to some extent from the worst consequences of their own evils. Thus the very law of punishment is in some degree reformatory. Admit that a soul has passed beyond the possibility of internal reform, that by no means places him beyond the possibility of external reform. For the very overflow of evil passion as it reverts upon itself, is made careful and prudent in its workings. Then, again, the very selfishness of the soul will curb its selfishness for the sake of self. We see this here; why may it not be so there? We see men of intelligence, but selfish and worldly to a degree, combine in this world to

protect themselves. Laws are often made here, good laws, on hellish principles. That is, they are made not in the desire to protect the rights of the neighbor, and to mete out justice to him, but selfishly to protect one's self in the enjoyment of his own possessions and pleasures. Selfish men combine for this end, and are true to one another in this. They have to yield to each other for the sake of self. Thus good is educed even from the law of evil.

Now I cannot view the Lord in the light of an earthly monarch, ruling hell by arbitrary laws and enforcing them at the point of the bayonet or by a vigilant police, using the angels as the only trusty agents for the enforcement of his edicts. I cannot understand the eternal blessedness of angels in such a role. But if we do away with the sulphur and flames, and seek for subordination and order even in hell, I can understand eternal principles, the light of God's love flowing through the flames of human passion, regulating and controlling the mighty hosts of evil through their own selfish propensities, and educing final outward order from the selfishness of evil and the dissonance of sin. I can see how the eternal principle of love and the ever-operating flow of mercy may so control the law of sin, as out of itself to evolve the best results and the greatest happiness to which on the plane of selfishness man may come. Here, however, intelligent selfishness would have control. The more outwardly refined would bring under their sway the more debased. Punishments would be instituted by those who had the intellectual force—for the intellectual

always cows the brutal in the end—for the protection of themselves. Fear would be held, like the slave-driver's lash, over the insubordinate; the certainty of punishment would bring them at last to a state of subordination, and hell itself become restored to a condition of outward order that would make it a tolerable place for even devils to dwell in. The sense of fear ingrained, would do for them what the sense of love has failed to do. Thus hell would be reduced to order. It would become the devil's heaven; but not heaven in any divine or angelic sense. Hell would be eternal; but not its punishment, except so far as the inherent demoralization is punishment. Its evil would be in the heart; but so far as restrained from breaking forth, the misery would be alleviated.

Take a prison which holds a great number of wicked, untamed men; untamed at heart, but restrained by fear of the prison discipline. There is work and play, study and recreation. Under fear, that hell is reduced to a state of order. There is more happiness or comfort for them than there ever was in the unrestrained license of crime. Liberate them, and they will run riot. Restrain them into decency, and they have a measure of enjoyment. The law of punishment has been executed on each, until he knows its certainty for every violation of the rules. He does not offend, because that punishment is before his eyes. He therefore ceases to offend, so long as the fear is not removed. True, therefore, he would rush into crime if he dared; but he dare not. There is a certain degree of order,

comfort and enjoyment; not indeed that of a heavenly household, but far above the grade of a Calvinistic hell.

Something like this would be my picture of hell restored. I believe that there the law of retaliation is inexorably self-executing; that, as the concealments of this world are removed, sin reacts upon itself with swift judgment and becomes its own avenger. I believe that the law of selfishness, left to its own operation, becomes self-protective; that in a region where hypocrisies are of short duration and easily discerned, it becomes inexorably self-protective. I do not affirm that the details here outlined for the sake of illustration, are to be found in the Sacred Scripture, but I believe that the principles on which they are based, are the veritable teachings of God's Word. I believe that hell will be restored to order, therefore, by the working of these laws; not, however, as a heaven of angelic love, but as a hell forever restrained and kept in order by fear.

Let us believe, then, that the love of God is wonderfully tender—infinite and far reaching; that though He makes the human soul free, He saves it on every plane of life, so far as He can without violating its freedom. But let us not surrender our rationality, and think that God can force man's freedom to save him even from hell. For when force comes in, freedom vanishes. But let us hold up the banner of Divine Love on every mountain top of thought; affirm it as guiding in heaven; assert it as ruling in hell. Let the dogma of eter-

nal flames go down before it, and the lake of literal fire forever vanish.

But though we see and know that there are grades of life and happiness in the unending future, extending from the very steps of God's throne down through the descending scale of loves and intelligences, until we reach the lowest depths of selfishness and fear, let us believe that God has laws which bind them all in the everlasting chains of his mercy and bring them under the ceaseless action of his love. Cherishing this belief, while our sense of the dreadful reality of hell is deepened, and its restraining power increased rather than diminished, we rejoice to see and know that God is infinitely more reasonable and human than the old theologies have taught, and some would still have us believe.

IV.

THE FIRES OF HELL.

THERE is a large class of Bible interpreters, who insist on a strictly literal exposition of all Scripture. They will read you a passage of appalling import, and, with a gesture of assertion which means that from this position there is no appeal, will say: "Thus saith the Lord; and the passage means just what it says; and if you say anything else, your are discrediting God's holy Word." They insist that literal interpretation alone saves the Scripture from profanation. No matter into what strange paths it may lead you; no matter what vindictive sort of God it may ask you to worship; no matter what unreasonable doctrines it may require you to believe; so much the better ground for the exercise of faith.

Interpreters of this class have never learned, or else they totally forget, the first principles of Biblical criticism—facts which are so patent, so well known and so clearly undeniable that he who runs may read. They forget that the very essence of the oriental styles of writing, is their florid imagery, their poetic diction, their proneness to express ideas by similitude, allegory or parable. They forget that one of the chief characteristics of the oriental languages, lies in the fact, that not only are ideas

adorned with highly figurative expressions, but that almost every word has, not only its literal, but also its metaphorical or emblematic meaning. They forget that the Hebrew above all languages was thus constituted. And they forget that even the New Testament, though written in Greek, was written by evangelists who were all Jews; that Christ himself on the human side, was a Jew, and that in speaking He spake to Jews, and to Jewish comprehension after the Jewish style. I set aside for the present the idea (though I have not the slightest doubt of its correctness), that the correspondential or symbolic method is the Divine style of writing, and maintain that the fact that the Old Testament was written by Hebrews in Hebrew, and the New by Hebrews in Greek, simply renders absurd the theory that either is to be literally interpreted.

The theory that the Bible throughout is to be understood literally, so often and so emphatically insisted on, is scarcely worthy of serious consideration; so inconsistent is it with the character of the language in which it was written, with the peculiarities of the Hebrew mind, and so opposed to the internal evidence of all Divine writing. And no man ever claimed it who was not obliged, almost in the same breath, to use a Biblical phrase in a metaphorical sense, in order to apply Scripture in any rational manner.

Thus, because Jacob said, "Joseph is a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall,"* or "Naphthali is a hind let loose,"† who

* Gen. xlix. 22. † Gen. xlix. 21.

would dream of claiming that Joseph was literally a portion of a tree, or that Naphthali was veritably a young deer? Or because our Lord calls himself the Good Shepherd, and because He commanded Peter to feed his lambs, who is foolish enough to think that Jesus was literally a keeper of sheep when on earth, or that He desired the disciple to feed his followers with the grass of the field. We know very well that Christ was a shepherd only of souls; that his lambs were the true-hearted ones of his church; that the food with which they were to be fed, were the truths of spiritual life. In this way we can pass through the Scriptures verse by verse, and see, if we will, that it is figurative, and written by correspondences and similitudes in all its parts. From the sensuous or literal interpretation of the Scriptures, all the unreasonable and contradictory dogmas of the church have sprung. In their spirit they are consistent throughout. In their letter they are not, for they were not intended to be in all respects literally interpreted.

To illustrate: Our Lord said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." * Now, are we to believe, as some would have us, that all who are not plunged in water or sprinkled at the hands of a Christian minister, are damned? There is a baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire, as well as a baptism of water. Now fire is a symbol of the Lord's love. The water baptism is simply a representative of the higher or spiritual baptism. While it is proper,

* Mark xv. 16.

therefore, to observe the outward form, do you not see that it is not the plunging of the body in water which effects salvation, but the immersion of the soul in the spirit and love of God? This makes us truly his children. The letter here gives us a solemn and significant rite; but the spirit of the text gives us a grand and practical truth.

Again; the Scripture says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."* Now, some would have us believe, in view of this, that the wicked soul after this life, is annihilated—blotted forever out of existence. They ignore the numerous passages of Scripture which show what is meant by the term death as applied to the soul. It is not annihilation, but the destruction of spirituality, the higher and heavenly life of the soul. Thus in the first pages where Adam is commanded not to eat of the forbidden fruit, it is said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Yet in fact he was only driven out of Eden, and according to the letter lived for centuries after. The letter, therefore, is not true. The spirit of this Scripture is, that evil, self-seeking sin, is the forbidden fruit. Eating of this produces moral though not natural death. The words therefore are true when understood spiritually. The meaning of the Scripture term, death, as applied to the soul, was given by Paul to the Romans when he said to them, "To be carnally minded is death."†

Again: Because it is said that the wicked "shall

* Eze. xviii. 20. † Rom. viii. 6.

go away into everlasting fire," are we justified in believing, as so large a portion of the Christian world would have us, that they are tormented forever in the flames of material fire? Does not the Bible explain itself when it says that "wickedness burneth as a fire"? Wickedness in the soul is similar to fire in the field. Figuratively, it burns and rankles there, and sends up its lurid flame and blackening smoke like fire amid the stubble. There is a correspondence between the two. The wickedness of the soul is spiritual fire, but it is not material flame. And as the fire of evil is kindled within us here, so, unless we extinguish it by resisting and overcoming the evil, it will burn forever in the future state. The Scripture is full of these similitudes, containing often their own explanation. We are told that jealousy "burneth like fire;" that "wrath burneth like fire." All evils and sins in their operation upon the soul, are compared to the burning of fire. So we often meet in the Bible with such expressions as "consumed with terrors," "consumed with anger," "consumed because of our iniquities." And these are used not in the future tense, as of something to happen hereafter, but in reference to the sins of the wicked as they are here in this world. It is true that our moral nature consumes away through sin; that anger bursts forth like a flame; that envy, jealousy, revenge, mount up like fires within the soul; that all evils rankle and burn with an unholy flame; but it is not true that they are material fire; not true that they are different in the other world from what they are in this; not true that

they are anything else than comparisons, similitudes or correspondences, designed to convey spiritual truth which material things cannot measure nor express in any other way than through the great law of analogy or correspondence. It is also true that if a good man were to have his spiritual sight opened as did the seer of Patmos, he might see, as John did, the hellish heart-conditions depicted in correspondential forms of fire and smoke; but it is not true that these spiritual representations would consist of material flame, brimstone or smoke.

It is the spirit of the Scripture that we want. It is this that our souls need. If we get not this, we get nothing true. It is not true that by seeking its spirit, we get confused and wander away from its safe landmarks, and pile up false doctrines. It is from an absurd adherence to the letter that every false doctrine known to the church, has had its birth. It was from that, that the inquisition tortured Galileo for asserting that the earth is round. It was that which induced Luther to make the broad assertion that faith, no matter what a man's life might be, would save. It was that which led the popes, as the supposed successors of St. Peter, to assert the claim of infallibility and of power to open and shut the gates of heaven to whomsoever they would. It was this same sensuous and literal method of interpretation, which gave birth to that terrible exclamation of Jonathan Edwards addressed to the unconverted, "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you."

And yet the extreme literalists are very inconsistent. In the case of this doctrine of the eternal burnings of hell, it is strikingly manifest. They will take a text like this: "Therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire."* And they will say: "Do you not see? He is cast into the fire. Fire means fire; the thing that we see every day, that consumes everything it touches. Yes, it means fire and nothing but fire." They will not say that a man who goes to hell becomes a tree; nor that when he leaves this world, he is literally cut down by an axe of steel. The absurdity of that is too apparent. Still they insist that the fire is material flame. Surely the expression must be all literal or all figurative. The commonest consistency requires that. If a man is really burned by literal fire, then he is a tree, and is cut down by an axe at death. But if he is only a tree by similitude, and the hewing down is figurative of his soul's falling into hellish degradation through a false and evil life, why then he is only *burned* by similitude, or cast into the *fire* in a moral or spiritual sense. Is not that plain? Is it not sound reasoning?

So when it is said that the Lord "will gather his wheat into the garner, but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,"† who pretends to believe that the good hereafter become *wheat*, or that the wicked become *chaff*, except figuratively or by correspondence? Yet the old school interpreters hold

* Matt. iii. 10. † Matt. iii. 12.

to the unquenchable fire as a literal fact. If the unquenchable fire were meant by our Lord to be understood literally, then do the good literally become wheat, and the wicked chaff; and are not the former as wheat actually garnered into granaries? But if this is not true—and all will admit the idea to be simply ludicrous—then the unquenchable fire signifies simply the fire of selfishness, worldliness, lust and hate, which, becoming ingrained in the character, cannot be put out even by God without destroying the soul; and hell for that soul becomes an eternal fact.

Take another illustration. It is said by our Lord, "If thy hand offend thee cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."* So with regard to the foot and the eye: "If thy foot offend, cut it off and cast it from thee;" "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." And the same words are emphasized with regard to entering into hell with two feet or two eyes, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Rarely has fanaticism gone to the absurdity of cutting off the hand or foot, or plucking out the eye. The language is recognized as that of a parable, as figurative, except this eternal fire! This is to be understood and accepted literally.

But, spiritually interpreted, this is all very plain. The hand is the instrument wherewith we work.

* Mark ix. 43, 44.

It therefore represents our works. The foot symbolizes our walk in life. The eye has reference to how we see things; not here naturally, but spiritually. In other words, it is our understanding of life. How do we view purity, virtue and godliness? How do we view evil and sin, lust and crime? Now if our works are wicked, let us cut them off and put them away. If our walk in life is evil, let us do likewise. If our understanding of the theory of life is false and vain, let us pluck that out. Otherwise the very wickedness and demoralization of our souls make hells of them—so cast us into hell. The worm is the symbol of the lowest and most groveling lusts of the sensual nature. When once these have the mastery, and the soul is given up to their sway, there is no end to it. The worm of sensuality and lust never dies—not in this world, not in the next. The fires of evil passion become inherent, are unquenchable both in this world and the world to come.

Such is the spirit of this Scripture, whatever its letter may be. Here is another text; and all is figurative we are told except the worm and the fire. Why these exceptions? Let consistency assert itself. All is figurative, or none. If the eye and the hand and the foot, then the worm and the fire.

And so it is with all the texts of similar import. There is not one which is not connected directly with a parable, or expressed in language that can only be understood in a spiritual or figurative manner. There is not a single exception to this.

The lake of fire and brimstone then, is not a myth,

but a symbol of hell. It is an expression representative of the burnings of evil and lust within the heart,—representative of the realm where are gathered those who have abandoned themselves hopelessly to sin. These burnings are unquenchable, but they are not the tortures of literal flame. There is no indication in the Scripture that this expression and kindred ones were ever meant to be understood literally. Our common sense is more valuable in the interpretation of the Scriptures, than any dogma of the fathers. This is an age when reason asserts its authority. The antiquity of a superstition does not make it less a superstition; and the authority of uninspired commentators has no binding force, and cannot eliminate the true spirit of a sacred book, nor make what is absurd reasonable, nor cause error to be truth.

There has been prolonged discussion over the Scripture terms *eternal* and *everlasting* as applied to punishment. It is asserted by the opponents of eternal punishment, that the Greek word *aionion* does not mean eternal, but "into the ages," or, "for ages." Therefore, while disposed to admit the doctrine of a future punishment of some kind, they will not admit that it is endless. Their position seems to be sound. The words do not necessarily imply punishment of an eternal or everlasting nature.

In previous lectures I have indicated the New-Church view of this question of future punishment. There is punishment, if you please so to term it, which is the natural result of a degraded nature. Perhaps this may be more properly termed the con-

sequence than the punishment of sin. It is made up of the heart-burnings, jealousies, ranklings of the spirit, which are more or less inseparable from the existence of envies, revenges, lusts, evils of all kinds in the heart. These are the fires which cannot be quenched. They flame up with more or less activity as they are more or less indulged. They sometimes smoulder, but they never die. Hell, or any of its societies, or any single heart-hell, may be likened to Vesuvius, whose fires are always alive in its bosom, but become rampant only when there is an eruption.

Then there is what we more commonly call punishment, which would be meted out in hell, to prevent the utter anarchy and destruction of all its spirits, by the unbridled license of evil acts on the part of its hosts. That open crimes which lead to anarchy would be repressed there by swift and certain punishments, which would in the course of ages subdue them under the rod of fear, there can be no doubt. These punishments would continue only according to the necessities of the case, and for purposes of outward reform. They would be simply reformatory. Their purpose would be to repress by fear the breakings out of the smothered fires into volcanoes of crime. They would cease when the necessity ceased, and be repeated when criminal conduct demanded it. There must be order even in hell. No state of society in this world or the other, can exist in perpetual anarchy. But the task-masters of hellish societies, by the swift and sure infliction of these punishments, would in the end bring

individuals into a state where eruptions of crime would be few and far between—would almost cease. While therefore the fires would be unquenchable, the punishments would be only into the ages. While the smouldering coals of hellish lusts would keep alive forever, the punishments would be temporary.

This, too, is according to Scripture; for the fire of hell is often pronounced unquenchable, while the punishment of hell is indicated by a term that does not necessarily signify endless. Hell and its torment are, therefore, separable. Hell is eternal, but its torment only for the time. Evil can never become good, but fear may lash it into decent behavior. Hell can never become heaven, but it may, through fear of punishment, cease to wage constant war upon its neighbor. It can be done so here; it will be done so hereafter.

To sum up the whole question under discussion: God is all love and mercy. He is never actuated by hate or revenge. He makes man morally free, and holds up before him the truth that obedience to the laws of good brings happiness, and that disobedience brings woe. Man was made morally free, because virtue is not virtue where one is forced to practice it, but is only virtue when freely chosen. Therefore virtue is life and heaven in the heart, and vice is death and hell there. Ingrained virtue brings us with the angels in heaven hereafter, and ingrained vice with the devils in hell; and this because heaven and hell, angels and devils, separate hereafter by the law of mutual repulsion. Whoever goes to heaven or hell goes there from choice. Hell is

eternal, because it is the ingrained character of the soul. Its flames are unquenchable, because evil is its own fire. But punishment in the common acceptation of the term, is temporary, because it is only for the repression of anarchy. Hell will never cease to be hell, but will ultimately be brought into order under the law or influence of fear.

If man does not become an angel, it is his fault, not God's. The words of the Lord when on earth are applicable to all times and places: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."* The Lord would have us all under his wings; but we will not.

Let us never forget that hell as well as heaven is within—a thing of the heart. If we are to be saved, it is not from literal burnings and brimstone and fire, but from our own selfishness, worldliness and evil lusts. God is ever ready to save. To this end his providence is around us always and everywhere. But a portion of this work is ours. We must co-operate with the Lord. He gives us the freedom; we make the choice. He gives us the law; we yield or refuse obedience. He gives us the power; we appropriate or apply it. He gives us the weapons; we throw the spear. He gives us the armor; we put it on—if we will. Heaven and hell are before us; which will we choose?

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* Matt. xxiii. 37.

THE WORLD OF SPIRITS.

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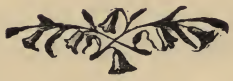

THE WORLD OF SPIRITS.

I PROPOSE in this lecture to consider the question of the soul's preparation for its final home in heaven or hell, so far as that may be effected after death.

If the position taken in previous lectures be true, that the soul, though spiritual in its nature, is a highly and delicately organized being; that it is human on the spiritual plane of life both in structure and form; that it is the real man here which does the thinking, willing, loving, feeling, hearing and seeing, while the body is only the machine through which these things are done; if it is true that our peculiar loves, affections, tastes, habits, principles of life, modes of thinking and of viewing things are what make up the soul, the very stuff, so to speak, of which it is formed; if it is true that when the soul goes at death into the other world, it carries its own character and quality with it, just as when you export a rose-tree to Europe, it is the same rose, with the same color, odor, conformation of leaf, and other characteristics; if these things, I say, are true, then it follows that the mass of people when they die enter upon the spiritual plane of life with mixed and diverse characters.

Heaven is a state of perfect love to the Lord and the neighbor. Hell is a state of consummate selfishness. Heaven is a state of purity of heart; hell a state of spiritual defilement. Heaven has banished all taint of evil from its presence; hell has lost all knowledge of the good, the angelic and the God-like. Now, take an audience like this before me. Which of you feels that, were you to die to-night and so pass from the plane of earth-life into the other world, you are prepared to enter at once on the life of heaven? Which of you has cultivated to its full extent that sense of entire dependence on the Lord, that unwavering trust in his providence, that total reliance on his love, that utter peace, and rest, and love, and purity that makes you a perfect angel fitted for the joys of the blessed? Are there no traces of earthly impurity still clinging to your souls?—no disquietudes, no passions, no selfishness, no little sins, which are incompatible with the peace, purity and innocence of heaven?

Or, look again among your friends, neighbors and companions. How many characters of unmixed heavenly-mindedness can you count within the compass of your recollection? How many can you number within the present circle of your acquaintance? You see men and women, good, no doubt, in their way, yet with some faults, failings and moral weaknesses. We all have our good points; but who of us is entirely clean in the sight of God and his angels? We are not prepared—our friends and neighbors are not prepared—to claim the merit of having come up to that standard which Jesus

Christ set up: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Men cannot leave this world as they are—not one in a thousand—and enter at once upon the glorious life of that realm concerning which the Word of God says: "There shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie."

We know this. And we know that the soul cannot be suddenly changed from evil to good, from defilement to purity, from wrong thinking to right thinking, from wrong habit to right habit—all of which changes are necessary to an entrance into heaven, in a moment, a day or a month.

All creation is a matter of growth; the moral creation of the soul as well as the material growth of a tree; the spiritual formation of heaven within us, as well as the physical development of the body from infancy to manhood, or the intellectual development of the mind from the pretty foolishness of the babe to the high wisdom of the sage. Even if you are converted, or have turned from self and the world to the Lord, still it requires a protracted combat, unceasing vigilance, and much time, to grow into the love and habitual practice of all the virtues which the Lord commands. It is one thing to say you are converted and regenerated, and quite another thing to have every desire, thought and deed, in the every-day business of life as well as in the worship of the sanctuary, thoroughly saturated with the spirit of God.

This is also the plain teaching of Christ. The

perfect heavenly spirit—that perfection of regeneration which alone fits you for a life in heaven, is a matter of slow and gradual development. The Lord compares it to the growth of vegetation. He says that the kingdom of God is "as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up." * He says that the growth of the kingdom of heaven in the mind, is like that of grain, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." † But He adds that the sickle is not put in, that souls are not gathered by the angels unto themselves in the great harvest-day, until the fruit is fully ripe. He says also that the kingdom of heaven is like "a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and cast into his garden; and it grew and waxed a great tree." ‡ These teachings are intended to show us that the graces and beauties and goodness of heaven, grow in us by slow degrees, and never become ours instantaneously or suddenly. Like the trees they advance gradually day by day. I know that the church of to-day does not always teach this; but it is clearly the teaching of the Divine Master.

So we do not, even the best of us, leave this world quite angelic in purpose, thought and act. Good and evil are mixed within us, and we are not fully prepared for the heavenly realms. These weaknesses and failings and impurities must all be eradicated, and their opposites obtained as fixed characteristics of the soul, before that consummation is reached.

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* Mark iv. 26, 27. † Mark iv. 28. ‡ Luke xiii. 19.

Either, therefore, none of us will reach heaven, or there is a preparatory place hereafter. Either condemnation awaits almost the entire human race, or else a work that is begun here is finished there. The conclusion is irresistible. Men do not go directly to heaven after death. There is a preparation state in the world beyond. If the work has been begun here—the work of soul purification—no matter whether you are Christian or heathen, no matter what sect you belong to, or whether you belong to any, if you have committed yourself to the earnest work of the soul's purification here, the work can be finished there, which will at last prepare you for heaven. It is not a question of belief, doctrine or creed, it is a question of a fixed desire and earnest striving for the heavenly life.

Has one been born in heathen lands, and never heard the name of Christ? or if he has heard it, been educated to scorn it? Or born in Christian lands, has he been surrounded by influences which have held him down? or has he inherited traits or taints which have separated him from the influences of the wise and good? Beyond the grave there is a place for education and enlightenment, for discipline and training, for reformatory correction, for elevation and purification, under circumstances which earth does not afford.

Or take those who are wicked at heart, selfish to the core, worldly beyond hope, sensual and corporeal beyond reclamation. Some perhaps sink down so low before they leave this world, that they are about ready to go with their own at once. But what multi-

tudes of ingrained selfish men would scout the idea of their belonging to the company of the lost! Outside of the churches they are moral men, who act within the law, but from utterly selfish principles. They do not steal; but it is from fear of fine and imprisonment. They do not commit burglaries or assaults; but it is from cowardice not principle. They do not murder; but it is because they fear the gallows. They gain the good opinion of their fellow-men; but it is from love of worldly reputation, not from love of right. Or inside of the churches they read their Bibles and pray; but their hearts are as hard as the stones of the street. They are regular church attendants, but they can lie and cunningly defraud as well as other men. They can talk religion and wear long faces, but they hold practical virtue in light esteem, and practical sin they believe in if hidden from the world's eye. They believe in themselves, and would claim the highest seats at the marriage supper when launched into the other world, utterly ignorant of the fact that their souls are not clothed in the wedding garment of right principle or heavenly character.

Now, as remarked on a previous occasion, men go to heaven or hell of their own free choice. Such souls as these thoroughly believe in themselves and their own merits. They must learn their own hearts. It is slow work. They must be revealed to themselves. They must be placed in situations and under circumstances where the exterior coverings of character will, one by one, be torn off, and they be brought into their own selves—their inmost char-

acter. If they have thought that they believed in God, they must learn that their belief was all a sham. If they supposed that they accepted the spiritual truths of religion, they must be convinced that it was mere fallacy. If they pursued a life of piety, they must be led to see that they lived a lie. For evil does not believe in God, however much it may profess; sin does not believe in religion, however sanctimoniously it may pray. And the inherently dead soul may for the sake of a reputation, deceive even itself as to its motives in professing faith and piety.

Thus a preparatory state for even hell is needed. For men must go there voluntarily, and not be pushed in against their will by an almighty fiat. God is in all things just. He has given the liberty of heart-choice to every soul that was ever born. He will place them in situations where they may see for themselves; but He will never force any one into heaven or hell.

The constitution of the human mind is such, that a preparatory state beyond this life is a necessity. If we do not accept this view, we are forced into gross absurdities. On the one hand, we must either believe that the soul goes into heaven smirched with the defilements of impurity, or that the Lord does what all his works and declarations and all human experience deny,—turns the evil of the heart into heavenly purity in the twinkling of an eye, and this without the man's own co-operation. On the other hand, we must either believe that the soul is sent to hell a firm believer (in its own estimation) in God,

his salvation and all true religion, and in himself as a child of God, or else that in the twinkling of an eye the Lord wrenches all these things out of the man without his co-operation, and remands him to eternal torments. In either case man's volition, his freedom of choice, is entirely lost sight of. The very principle above all others which makes him a man, we deprive him of. This we hold to be simply absurd ; and we assert that the very principles of human existence, of salvation and of spiritual death, which the Bible unequivocally lays down and Christ plainly teaches, absolutely demand for their consistent interpretation a state of preparation in the other life.

I say a state of preparation. There are three general states of life thus shadowed forth. This world is the place where soul-character is formed. Here the choice is made. You may not see it, nor I, for we cannot read hearts. Yet it is made here ; and we may well believe that none leave this world until that point is settled. What is the inmost resolve of the soul, fixed, permanent and decisive ? That is the question. Not, do evils—even very gross ones—still cling to it ? Not, do falsities of religious belief—even very gross ones—still assert their sway ? Not, do hypocritical appearances or mere worldly refinements lie to the world concerning the inner man ?—but what, in the heart's inmost secret place, known perhaps to God alone, is the decisive love of the soul ? Has it declared for good or for evil ? for God or for self ?

This is the question that is answered in the World

of Spirits which all enter when they leave this. This is what is settled on that grand preparation plane of future life. Here, character is formed and determined. There, each one's ruling love is fully developed and disclosed. Appearances are gradually, one after another, stripped off. We find out what we are. Have we chosen good and God? Then the defilements that cling to us will be removed. As fast as they appear—as appear they all must—the chastening and chastising must go on until they shall have been forever subdued; and the soul that seeks the good, will kiss the rod that reminds it of its work. Have we chosen evil and self? Then we enter into the inner life and belief of the heart; and when we see and know ourselves, we go where we belong, and with those with whom alone we can agree and live.

This place or state is clearly shadowed forth in Scripture, though in the English version it does not so distinctly appear. It is the Hades, the first place of departed souls so often mentioned in the Bible, but in our English version sometimes rendered *hell*, and sometimes the *grave*. It is also referred to (as are often hell and heaven) by figurative expressions. It is referred to in Isaiah and in Ezekiel as the "lower parts of the earth," but in terms which unmistakably show that the expression refers to a state of life beyond the grave.* It is the place under the altar, that is, under heaven, described in the Reve-

* See Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 7090; Is. xliv. 23; Ez. xxvi. 20; xxxi. 14–16.

lation, where certain souls were held for a season until their time should be fulfilled.* It is referred to by many symbols and correspondential expressions, which admit of no rational interpretation except on this theory. For where souls are spoken of, as in the other life, yet as not having reached their final place, where can they be but in a middle or intermediate state? And why would they be kept there, unless in preparation for their final destiny? Why would they be spoken of as in tribulation—though white robes were finally given them and a promise of deliverance—unless they were passing through a cleansing process by means of which they were finally to receive the wedding garment of righteousness and be elevated into heaven?

There is far more foundation in Scripture for the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory than Protestants are willing to admit, if we but divest it of the errors and superstitions which have been added to it, and which find no favor in the written Word.

I repeat, then, that there are in general three planes of life through which all mortals pass. This earth-life which forms the character; the world of spirits hereafter, where the inmost of the character already formed is fully developed, and the spirit is fully prepared for heaven, or divested of its external morality or holiness, and fitted thus for the life of hell; and, finally, the state of full fruition, or the life which is forever lived in one or the other of these abodes.

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* See Rev. vi. 9; vii. 1; x. 5; xiii. 11, etc.

Thus we find the meaning of the words: "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known." Our Lord was here speaking of characters and motives. He could not have meant them as applicable to this world, for in this world it is not so. We do not know each other's hidden sentiments or motives. We know comparatively little of each other. We are enigmas even to ourselves. They could not apply to heaven, for heaven is not a place where angels are horrified with the emptyings of evil hearts in blasphemies, impurities, and defilements of every kind. They could not apply to hell, for those who are striving for the better way would not go down among the wicked in order to fit themselves for godliness, any more than one of you would seek the Five-Points of New York in order to gain heavenly-mindedness. It is in the preparatory world where the spirit-man is gradually stripped of all sophistries and concealments, and stands forth as he is. It is there that all the heart's secrets are revealed, and all the soul's motives known.

The great doctrine of "Know thyself" is here brought into full play. When one knows himself he takes his position, not before; for till then he does not know where he belongs. If he has evils and sees them, he can then put them away; but not until he sees them. At first we would be brought face to face with our more external evils; then with those of the thought; then with those of inward motive—these one after another. For it is the ruling love that makes the man, and not the mere act. It

is not so much what we do, as why we do it, that determines the real character. Here everybody sees what we do, and judges us by that. Sometimes they judge right and sometimes wrong. There they read the inward motive, and we at last come to read it also in ourselves. There is no misjudging there. Then we come to see what we have to put away, what to create anew within us. Then we may do this; but until we do, we cannot sit with the angels as their companions and peers.

I am aware of the unsatisfactory nature of this brief treatment of so great a theme. I am aware that a hundred questions pertinent to the issue may arise, which here remain unanswered. But you will find them fully and satisfactorily answered by Swedenborg; yes, and all other subjects concerning the future life, handled by him in a conclusive and exhaustive manner.* To his works therefore I invite your attention, provided you go to them not from mere idle curiosity, but because you really thirst for truth. If it is only for curiosity, you will have neither the patience nor the spirit for their candid perusal; for the wonderful truths of the spiritual realm are not to be appreciated or grasped, if read as one would devour the last new novel, or drink in the narrative of the latest sensation in the morning papers. If, however, you are seeking truth for its own sake, and have the patience to ponder and the

* See Vols. I. and II. of the "Swedenborg Library," which contain the substance of the author's Pneumatology.

eagerness to examine, and a desire to live the truth, which all ought to have, then you may drink at this fountain and find it living water, clear to the comprehension, well proven to the intellect and satisfying to the heart.

One last thought: Does this view of a preparatory state make it a matter of indifference how far we purify the soul here? By no means. Beware, lest through indifference you form your character for hell. The more truth you know, the less may you dare to dally with the life of evil. He who sins through ignorance, sins only in a light degree. But he who sins in full view of the consequences, and of the Lord's plan for our redemption, madly defies God and plays with the thunderbolts of hell. He is like the man who should cry, "See how closely I can leap to the verge of the infernal precipice, and not fall in!"

Prevention is infinitely better than any chances of cure. The life of heaven may be so nearly lived on earth, that it is but a step from this world to "the shining shore." But each evil cherished, each sin committed, is forming and maturing the character. Each further step makes its eradication so much the more difficult. Each yielding to wrong is a new fang added to the moral cancer, a new agony to be endured in cutting it out from the soul. If you would avoid suffering, yield yourself to the Lord's commandments now and here. If you would be spared the delirious agonies of recovery from the soul's fever, stand aloof from the pestilence while yet you may. If you would climb to the loftiest heights,

dwell nearest to the throne of God, and receive the beams of his love to the fulness of your capacity, you must prepare yourself here. On earth the character is formed; in other spheres you can only develop the quality or kind of life freely chosen and begun here. And whether you dwell on the border lines of the beautiful land or in its inmost centre, whether you enter the highest wisdom of its glorious life or plod along its lower levels, whether the Divine love is faintly discerned, or sweeps through your trembling heart with a power which makes the wondrous blessings of divinest strength your own, depends on the degree of your fidelity to the laws of your higher life, while yet you are on earth. The more prompt and entire our obedience, the more light; the more love we acquire below, the more power above to have and hold the life Divine. The more musical the quality of tone which the heart's harp-strings gain below, the sweeter the tune it will play above, and the further its melody will float, with the capacity of attuning other hearts to the harmonies of heaven.

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